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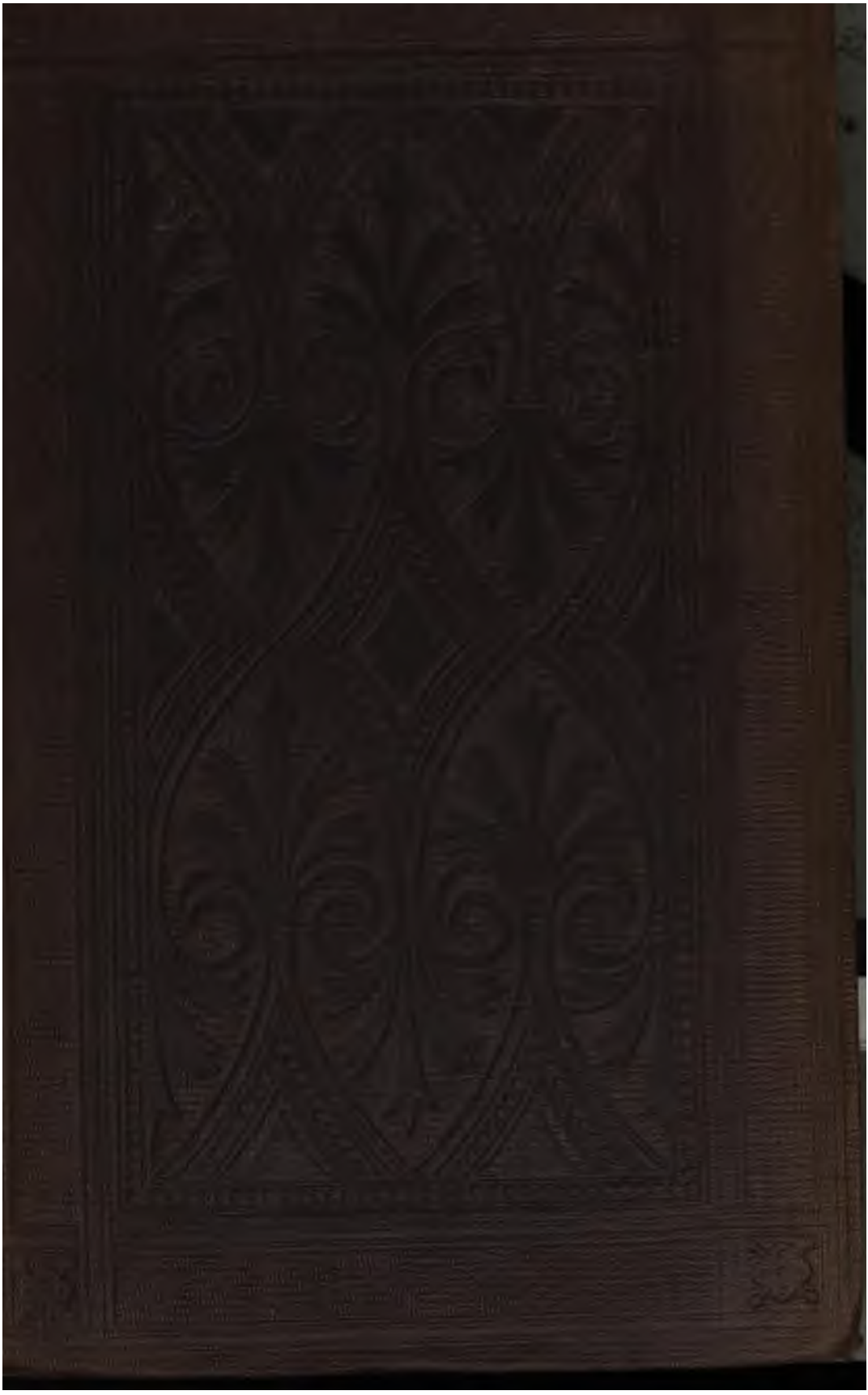

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# THE MONKS OF THE WEST

THE

# MONKS OF THE WEST

## FROM ST BENEDICT TO ST BERNARD

BY

THE COUNT DE MONTALEMBERT

MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY

*FIDE ET VERITATE*

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION

VOL. V.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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THIS ENGLISH VERSION OF HER HUSBAND'S WORK

ON THE CONVERSION OF ENGLAND

Is Dedicated by the Translator

TO

MADAME DE MONTALEMBERT.

A

# THÉOPHILE FOISSET

ANCIEN CONSEILLER

A LA COUR D'APPEL DE DIJO

SOUVENIR RECONNAISSANT

DE

TRENTE ANS

D'UNE AMITIÉ

VRAIE, FIDÈLE, ENTIÈRE,

SANS LACUNE ET SANS RIDE.

---

AMICUS FIDELIS

MEDICAMENTUM VITÆ ET IMMORTALITATIS.

ECCLI. VI. 16.

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THE memory of Ceolfrid, along with that of his faithful English, has faded out of the country in which he died. But he belongs nevertheless to the general history of the Church by the direct influence which he exercised upon the conclusion of that great struggle between Celtic Christianity and Roman unity which had agitated the British Isles for more than a century, and which had cost so many holy monks, from Augustin to Wilfrid, so much anxious thought and effort. Ceolfrid, trained in the school of Wilfrid, had the glory of giving the last blow to that species of schism which Wilfrid to his cost had conquered; and this supreme victory was won at the very time when Wilfrid concluded in obscurity his long and laborious career.

A year after the death of Wilfrid, Nechtan, the king of those Picts who occupied the north of Caledonia, the successor of that Bruidh who received the great Celtic apostle Columba, wrote to Abbot Ceolfrid a memorable letter. This tributary king was not only a Christian, but greatly occupied by religious questions. He meditated much on the Holy Scriptures, and was thus led to understand, and to regret, the advantages of Catholic unity, from

which his nation was to a certain extent separate by the paschal question. He resolved to lead back his people to the Roman rule, notwithstanding the obstinate resistance of the monks of Iona, the sons of St Columba, who continued the apostolical work of their patriarch. To overcome their opposition, he determined, in one of the singular revolutions of mortal affairs, to address himself to that Northumbria which had been evangelised by Celtic missionaries from Iona, imbued with the traditional error of their race, but which he knew to have already conformed to the rules of the Roman Church. At the same time, in seeking the aid of the Anglo-Saxon Church, he did not apply either to the bishops who had divided among themselves Wilfrid's spoil, nor even to the great Monastery of Lindisfarne, which had been so long the point of junction between the two races. Instead, he knocked at the door of the new sanctuaries on the banks of the Wear and Tyne, to which Benedict Biscop had given the highest place in public veneration; he asked the aid of Abbot Ceolfrid, who for twenty years had worthily occupied the place of the holy traveller. He sent to him a special embassy to ask of him good arguments, set forth in writing, with which to refute the partisans of Celtic ritualism in respect to Easter and the tonsure;[1] and at

The King of the Picts requests Ceolfrid to send him architects, and arguments in favour of Roman unity. 710.

[1] "Naiton . . . admonitus ecclesiasticarum frequenti meditatione scripturarum. . . . Quæsivit auxilium de gente Anglorum quos jamdudum ad exemplum S. Romanæ et Apostolicæ Ecclesiæ suam religionem instituisse cognovit. . . . Postulans ut exhortatorias sibi litteras mitteret,

the same time prayed the abbot to send him architects to build him a church of stone, like the Romans, promising to dedicate the church, when built, to the honour of St Peter, and to follow with all his people the observances of the Roman Church as much as the distance and difference of language permitted them to do.[1]

Answer of Ceolfrid, in which he quotes Plato.

Ceolfrid sent him architects, who were, without doubt, monks of his community, and whose mission thus gives us the exact date of the introduction of Christian architecture into Scotland, where up to that moment the churches were made of wood, or osiers, in the Irish fashion. He wrote at the same time to the Pictish king a long letter which Bede has preserved to us, and in which he begins by quoting, not the Scriptures or the Fathers, but Plato, in that well-known passage in the *Republic* where it is said that, for the happiness of the world, it is necessary that kings should be philosophers, or philosophers kings. In the legitimate glory of the greatest thinker of antiquity there is, perhaps, no ray purer or more precious than that invocation of his name and authority, more than a thousand years after his death, by a Saxon prelate to a Celtic king, both sprung from races totally unknown to Greece and her great men. "But," adds Ceolfrid,

quibus potentius confortare posset eos qui Pascha non suo tempore observare præsumerent. . . . Sed et architectos . . . qui juxta morem Romanorum ecclesiam de lapide in gente ipsius facerent."—BEDE, *Hist. Eccles.*, v. 21.

[1] "In quantum dumtaxat tam longe a Romanorum loquela et natione segregati nunc ediscere potuissent."

"if a man of the world was right in thinking and speaking thus, in what concerns the philosophy of this world, how much more ought the citizens of the celestial country, exiled here below, to desire that the great ones of this earth should apply themselves to know the laws of the Supreme Judge, and, by their example and authority, to make these laws observed. Thus we take it as a mark of heavenly favour bestowed on the Church each time that the masters of the world apply themselves to know, to teach, or to keep the truth."[1] Thereupon he enters into a theological and astronomical discussion, in which, passing in review the text of the Pentateuch, and the various cycles used from the time of Eusebius to that of Denis the Little, he proves that Easter ought to be celebrated, according to the usage of the Catholic Church, in the third week of the first lunar month, and always on Sunday. As for the tonsure, he admits that it is, in itself, an indifferent matter; but he insists upon the fabulous tradition, which all the orthodox then held as an article of faith, by which the Roman tonsure, in the form of a crown, was attributed to St Peter, and the Irish tonsure, in which the front of the head was shaven, to Simon the Magician.

The letter of the Northumbrian abbot, which appears to modern readers long and wearisome,

[1] "Vere omnino dixit quidam secularium scriptorum. . . . Quod si de philosophia hujus mundi vere intelligere et de statu hujus mundi merito dicere potuit homo hujus mundi, quanto magis cœlestis patriæ civibus."—BEDE, *ibid.*

The Picts and their king abandon the Celtic ritual.

was completely successful. It was read publicly to the Pictish king, in presence of all the wise men of the country, translated verbally into their language. As soon as he had heard it, he rose, and, in the midst of the nobles by whom he was surrounded, knelt down and thanked God to have been so fortunate as to have received such a present from England. "I knew well," he said, "that this was the true way of celebrating Easter. But now I see the reason so clearly that I seem to have understood nothing about it before. For this cause, I take you all to witness, all you who sit with me here, that I will henceforward keep Easter thus, with all my people, and I ordain that all the clerks in my kingdom assume this tonsure."[1] The ordinance was immediately put in operation, and the messengers of the king carried into all the provinces copies of the paschal calculation, with orders to efface the ancient tables. The monks and other ecclesiastics had also to receive the tonsure according to the Roman custom. Bede affirms that the change was received with universal joy in the Pictish nation. Nevertheless, the monks who had come from Iona—those of the *family of Columb-kill*, the *Columbites*, as Ceolfrid calls them—acted as their brethren at Ripon and Lindisfarne

[1] "Epistola, præsente rege Naitono, multisque viris doctioribus lecta ac diligenter ab his qui intelligere potuerant in linguam ejus propriam interpretata . . . exsurgens de medio optimatum sacro in consessu. . . . In tantum modo rationem hujus temporis observandi cognosco, ut parum mihi omnino videar de his antea intellexisse."—BEDE, *Hist. Eccles.*, v. 21.

had acted fifty years before. They preferred to leave their establishments, colonies founded more than a century before by their patriarch and his disciples, rather than to give up their insular tradition. A single line, short but expressive, in the annals of Ireland, bears witness to their fate. It is thus summed up—"King Nechtan expels the family of Iona from the country beyond the *dorsum Britanniæ*."[1]

The monks of Iona leave their monasteries rather than adopt the Roman ritual.

The country now called Scotland was then divided, as has been seen, between the Picts in the north and east, the Scots in the west, the Britons in Strathclyde, and the Northumbrians in the south. The supremacy of the Northumbrian kings, up to the downfall of Egfrid, over all the districts south of the Clyde and Forth, had been sufficient to secure, in that part of the country, the observance of the Roman ritual, represented by such men as Wilfrid and Cuthbert. The conversion of the Picts, under King Nechtan, to the Roman rule, in respect to Easter, established liturgical and theological unity throughout the northern part of Great Britain, with the exception of the isle of Iona and the little kingdom of the Dalriadian Scots, which probably to the last extremity remained faithful to the ritual and traditions of their national sanctuary.

[1] "Expulsio familiæ Ie trans dorsum Britanniæ a Nectano rege."—*Annales Tigernachii*, ad ann. 717. See above, vol. iii. p. 176, for the description of the mountain-range called *dorsum Britanniæ*.

Adamnan, Abbot of Iona, and biographer of St Columba. 624-703.

Yet, notwithstanding, a very eminent Irish monk —Adamnan, himself Abbot of Iona, and the most illustrious of Columba's successors—had long attempted to lead back the mother community, mistress of all the Caledonian Church, and always influential in the Church of Ireland, to the unity of Rome. If our readers have retained in their recollection our narrative of St Columba, they will pardon us for dwelling a little upon his biographer, of all the Irish monks the one to whom posterity is most indebted, for his revelation to us, not only of that great man, the immortal honour of the Celtic Church—but also of the spirit, general and individual, and the private and local life of that whole Church. He was the countryman and near relative of his holy predecessor, sprung, like him, from the sovereign race of the Nialls. When he was but a scholar, having been dedicated from his childhood to monastic life, he had, according to the legend, gained the favour of a powerful chief—Finnachta the Feaster or Banqueter. While begging, according to the usage of the time, for himself and his five companions, each of whom took it in turn to seek the daily nourishment, he met the cavalcade of the chief, and in running out of the way struck against a stone, fell, and broke the milk-jar which he carried on his back, and which contained all he had collected.[1] "Be not sad," said the chief, "I will protect thee." When Finnachta became

[1] REEVES, *Append. ad Præf.*, p. xlii.

monarch of all Ireland, Adamnan was his *Anmachara* or spiritual counsellor; and this fact explains the important part he played in Ireland during his whole life. After having been a monk at Iona under three abbots, he was himself elected abbot in 679. Aldfrid, the Northumbrian prince, brother and successor of Egfrid, then an exile in Ireland, had taken refuge in Iona, and had become the friend and the disciple of Adamnan; and when, after Egfrid's downfall, the exile became King of Northumberland, the abbot went to his former guest to reclaim the captives, men and women, whom the soldiers of Egfrid had carried away in the previous year, after their cruel and bloody invasion of Ireland.[1] His mission was not entirely without success; for he obtained from his friend the restitution of sixty prisoners, whom he himself accompanied back to Ireland. He returned on more than one occasion to visit King Aldfrid, whose literary tastes resembled his own. He dedicated to him his description of the holy places, which he compiled from the narratives of a Gallo-Frankish bishop called Arculfe, who, returning from Palestine by sea, had been shipwrecked on the coast of Ireland, from whence he had gone to visit the still celebrated sanctuary of Iona. Thanks to the liberality of the learned King Aldfrid, whose taste for geographical studies we have already remarked, a great number of copies were made of

His relations with King Aldfrid. 685.

[1] See vol. iv. p. 288.

this treatise, that it might be largely distributed and read even by the lower classes.[1]

It was during these journeys to and fro that the cultivated and fervent abbot[2] learned to understand the new customs introduced into the Anglo-Saxon Church by the efforts of Wilfrid, and although there is no trace in his life of any actual encounter between him and the great champion of Roman unity, it is certain that Adamnan, while in Northumbria, was so thoroughly moved by the spirit there diffused by Wilfrid, that he left the country with the resolution of henceforward preferring the rites of the universal Church to those of a little nation at the end of the world.[3] Ceolfrid did much to enlighten him on this point; in his letter to the King of the Picts he relates the visit of Adamnan to Wearmouth, and their conferences on the subject of the tonsure. "Holy brother," said the Northumbrian abbot to the Irish prelate, "you aspire to an immortal crown, why do you wear on your head so imperfect an image of it? and if you desire the society of St Peter, why do you bear the tonsure of him who anathematised St Peter?" "Beloved brother," answered Adamnan, "if I bear the ton-

[1] "Per ejus eis largitionem etiam minoribus ad legendum contraditus."—BEDE, v. 15. Bede has inserted many extracts of this description in his History; Mabillon publishes it entire at the end of vol. iv. of his *Acta Sanctorum*.

[2] "Erat vir bonus et sapiens et scientia scripturarum nobilissime instructus . . . abbas et sacerdos Columbiensium egregius."—*Ibid.*, v. 16, 21.

[3] "Cum videret ritus ecclesiæ canonicos . . . in ecclesiis Anglorum . . . cum suis paucissimus et in extremo mundi angulo positis . . . mutatus mente est."—*Ibid.*, c. 15.

sure of Simon the Magician, according to the custom of my country, do not think that I detest the less the Simoniacal heresy. I desire to follow with my best powers the footsteps of the Prince of Apostles." "I believe it," said Ceolfrid, "but in that case it would be best to wear openly the mark of the Apostle Peter which you have in your heart."[1] It is apparent by this that the leader of the Irish Church did not even dispute the imputed origin, at once fabulous and injurious, of his national custom.

He attempts in vain to lead back the monks of Iona to Roman usage.

But when, on his return to Iona, he attempted to lead the children of St Columba to his new conviction and to the Roman rule, he encountered an unconquerable resistance. To be treated as barbarians and rustics[2] by the Northumbrian monks and doctors troubled them little; they were aware that their spiritual ancestors had been initiated into the Christian faith two centuries before the Anglo-Saxons, who for the most part had been drawn out of the darkness of paganism only by the apostolic self-devotion of those whom their descendants disdained. The Celts, accordingly, adhered obstinately to the traditional rites of their glorious ancestors. When they saw their chief return with the Roman tonsure, the surprise and indignation of the monks of Iona were such that

[1] "Scias pro certo . . . quia etsi Simonis tonsuram ex consuetudine patria habeam, simoniacam tamen perfidiam tota mente detestor ac respuo."—BEDE, v. 21.

[2] *Ibid.*, iii. 4.

they have found form in an Irish legend.[1] The difference between the superior and the community became so painful that Adamnan, who was of a humble and peaceable character, could not hold head against it. Without abdicating, he yet ceased to live in his monastery, and passed a great part of the remainder of his life in Ireland.[2] He dedicated himself with ardour to the work of reunion, meeting there with much greater success than in his own community. Southern Ireland, as has been seen, had already returned to Roman unity, even before Wilfrid undertook his great work in England. Adamnan was the means of bringing back central and northern Ireland to the same rule. He procured the triumph specially of the Roman Easter and the orthodox tonsure, except in the communities directly under the sway of his own monastery at Iona. This victory was not won without great difficulty, but his gentleness and modesty triumphed over all.[3]

[1] Mac Firbis or Forbes.—*Irish Annals*, MS. quoted by Reeves, p. xli.

[2] The annals of Ireland give his presence there in 692 and 697. At the latter date he gave forth the *Law of Innocents*, or of Adamnan (see above, vol. iii. p. 302). His books were written in the midst of his journeys and pastoral cares, as he says in the preamble of his treatise *De Locis Sanctis*: "Quæ et ego, quamlibet inter laboriosas et prope insustentabiles tota die undique conglobatas ecclesiasticas sollicitudines constitutus, vili quamvis sermone descripens declaravi." He wrote his *Life of St Columba* between his two journeys from Ireland, from 692 to 697. He says nothing in it of his difference with his own monks in respect to Easter, but he mentions the prophecy of Columba at Clonmacnoise upon discord: "Quæ post dies multos ob diversitatem Paschalis festi orta est inter Scotiæ ecclesias." He remained in Ireland probably from 697 to 703, a period at which, according to Bede, he was still there. It was not too much for the difficult task he had to fulfil.

[3] "Prædicans eis modesta exhortatione . . . pene omnes qui ab Hiien-

He died the same year as his friend, the wise King Aldfrid. Before his death, and after having celebrated in Ireland the canonical Easter, he made a last attempt to win over the family of Columba, which he had governed for thirty years. It was in vain; all his entreaties were repulsed; but God graciously granted, says Bede, that this man, who loved unity and peace above everything, should attain to eternal life before the return of the paschal solemnity made the discord between himself and his disobedient monks notorious.[1]

His death. 23d Sept. 704 or 705.

The victory which Adamnan, the countryman and successor of St Columba, could not gain, was reserved for a man of another race but equal holiness—the Anglo-Saxon Egbert. The life of this monk is an example of the numerous and salutary relations which existed between the Irish Celts and the Anglo-Saxons, and which had been so odiously disturbed by the inexcusable invasion of the Northumbrian king Egfrid. It is in connection with this invasion that the name of Egbert has already appeared in this narrative.[2] He was one of the many English who crossed the sea in numbers so considerable as to fill entire fleets, and who threw themselves upon the Irish shore like flights of bees,

Iona is, however, brought back to unity by the Anglo-Saxon, Egbert. 716–729.

sium dominio erant liberi, ab errore avito correctos ad unitatem reduxit catholicam."—BEDE, v. 15.

[1] Adamnan has always been venerated as a saint. See the article upon him, BOLLAND., vol. vii. Sept., 24th, and the Breviary of Aberdeen. It is asserted that he ate only twice in the week—Sunday and Thursday. —*Ann. des Quatre Maitres*, ap. Reeves, p. lvii.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 289.

to enjoy the hospitality, both intellectual and material, of the Irish monasteries; while, on the other hand, the Greek Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of England, lived, by a happy exchange of brotherly kindness, surrounded by a crowd of young Irish monks. Some of the Anglo-Saxons, who sought a superior ascetic education in the Irish monasteries, returned to England, frequently filling places of the highest dignity there, and edifying their countrymen by their knowledge and virtue;[1] while others remained, casting in their lot for ever with the monastic ranks of Ireland.

Austere and holy life of Egbert in Ireland. 635-735.

Egbert stood in the first rank of those numerous scions of the Anglo-Saxon nobility who in their youth became voluntary exiles for Christ, in order to devote themselves in Ireland, far from their relations and their possessions, to a life of penitence, and, above all, to the study of the Holy Scriptures.[2] He was only twenty-five when the terrible pestilence broke out which, immediately after the first triumph of Wilfrid at the conference of Whitby, made such cruel ravages in the British Isles. He was then, with several of his countrymen, in a mon-

[1] Among others, Ceadda, the first rival of Wilfrid at York, and Ædilwin, of whom Bede says: "Ipse Hiberniam *gratia legendi* adiit, et bene instructus patriam rediit, atque episcopus in provincia Lindissi factus, multo ecclesiam tempore nobilissime rexit."—*Hist. Eccles.*, iii. 27. See what has been already said (vol. iv. p. 457, note) of the elder brother of Abbot Ceolfrid of Yarrow.

[2] "In Hibernia diutius exulaverat pro Christo . . . doctissimus in scripturis et longæ vitæ perfectione eximius. . . . De nobilibus Anglorum. . . . Quem peregrinam ducere vitam pro adipiscenda in cœlis patria retulimus."—*Hist. Eccles.*, v. 9.

astery, the site of which is at present represented by the picturesque ruins of Mellifont; he saw his companions dying around him daily, and when at last he was himself affected by the contagion, he had strength enough to leave the infirmary, and withdraw to a solitary place to review his life and weep over his sins. He had even the courage to pray God to spare his life until he had expiated the faults of his youth by good works, and made a vow if his prayer was granted to remain an exile for ever, and return to England no more. He then went in and lay down again, beside another young man, his closest and most intimate friend, who was mortally stricken, and lay in a sleep that was almost death. All at once the young sufferer awoke. "Ah, brother Egbert, what have you done?" he said. "I hoped so that we should have entered eternal life together; and now you let me die without you: know at least that your prayer is granted." The young man died that night; but Egbert survived for sixty-five years, and became a model of all monastic virtues. Not only did he call forth the affectionate admiration of his Anglo-Saxon countrymen, but even in Ireland, so fertile in marvels of holiness, he appeared an eminent saint. He emulated the most illustrious in his zeal for knowledge, in his eagerness to distribute to the poor the gifts lavished upon him by the rich, and in the austerities of his life. The great historian of the Christian glories of the Anglo-Saxon race has not

He loses his most intimate friend, who reproaches him for wishing to live without him.

disdained to inform us that during Lent, and even for forty days after Christmas, and fifty days after Whitsuntide, his entire nourishment consisted of a little bread, with milk from which the cream had been carefully removed. It was at this price that the right of speaking with authority to the nations, and of walking before them in the way of salvation, was purchased.[1]

He uses his influence over the Anglo-Saxons to send them as missionaries into Germany.

He employed his influence over the two races which rivalled each other in honouring his holiness, only for their good, their honour, and the general welfare of the Church. Though he did not succeed, notwithstanding his entreaties, in turning Egfrid, the king of his native Northumbria, from the crime of his abominable invasion of Ireland, he was more fortunate with others of his countrymen, whom he transformed into missionaries of the faith to the Germans. In his ascetic exile in Ireland he was the first of the Anglo-Saxons to conceive the generous, the divine idea of sending to the help of the mother-country, to Germany, which still belonged to Satan, the sons of her Britannic colony to show

[1] "Egressus est tempore matutino de cubiculo in quo infirmi quiescebant . . . finitis lacrymis, precibus et votis. . . . Expergefactus sodalis respexit eum. . . . O frater Ecgbert, O quid fecisti? Sperabam quia pariter ad vitam æternam intraremus. . . . Unde et genti suæ et illis in quibus exulabat nationibus Scottorum sive Pictorum exemplo vivendi . . . multum profuit. . . . Quod lac pridie novum in phialia ponere solebat, et post noctem ablata superficie crassiore, ipse residuum cum modico pane bibebat."—BEDE, iii. 27. Bede, who is always careful to cite his authorities, informs us that he gathered all these particulars from a priest, "veracissimus et venerandæ canitiei," to whom Egbert had narrated his life. Bede, who was born in 673, was more than fifty when Egbert died.

her the path of virtue and of life.[1] He knew well whence it was that his Anglo-Saxon ancestors had come, and that they had left behind them in darkness a crowd of other tribes, of the same stock and language, whose image stole upon his imagination, as did that of the little Irish children whose plaintive voices St Patrick heard in his dreams, and whose visionary appeals decided that saint, once a slave, to become the apostle of their country.[2]

Faithful to the vow which forbade him to land, even in passing, upon the soil of his native island, Egbert chartered a ship to take him direct from Ireland to Friesland, on the northern coast of Germany. But as he was about to embark, one of his travelling companions, who had been a monk at Melrose, lying down to sleep after matins, saw in a dream the prior Boswell, the tender friend of Cuthbert,[3] and beloved master of the novices at Melrose, one of the great saints of the Celtic Church in Northumbria, who charged him to warn Egbert that the will of God ordained him to give up his Germanic mission, and to devote himself, willingly or unwillingly, to the instruction and conversion of the Columbite monasteries. "Their

[1] "In Germania plurimas noverat esse nationes, a quibus Angli vel Saxones qui nunc Britanniam incolunt, genus et originem duxisse noscuntur. . . . Sunt autem Fresones, Rugini, Dani, Huni, antiqui Saxones, Boructuarii. . . . Christi miles circumnavigata Britannia disposuit si quos forte ex illis ereptos Satanæ ad Christum transferre valeret."—BEDE, v. 9.

[2] See vol. ii. p. 390.

[3] See vol. iv. p. 382 and 398.

ploughs do not go straight," said the prior to his former pupil; "they must be put back into the right furrow."[1] This dream, though twice repeated, made no impression upon Egbert; but his ship having been cast ashore, he acknowledged the will of God, and gave up his cherished project, so far as related to himself. As many, however, of the fervent and zealous monks among his own countrymen whom he could move to such a determination he sent in his place; when any returned discouraged by their want of success, he sought and found others more capable or more fortunate; and it was thus the beginning made by Egbert that gave to Germany Vicbert, Willibrord, Swidbert, the two Ewalds, and other holy bishops or abbots, whose names are justly venerated by Germany as her apostles, and whom we shall find again in the history of that country if it is permitted to us to pursue our task so far.

Egbert leads back the monks of Iona to the unity of the Roman ritual.

It was in the year of Ceolfrid's death, eleven years after the death of Adamnan, and seven years after that of Wilfrid, that the Anglo-Saxon Egbert succeeded in overcoming the most obstinate stronghold of Celtic dissidence, and procured the triumph of Roman unity in the monastic metropolis which had been founded by the most illustrious saint of the Celtic Church. A stranger of an alien and

[1] "Cum expletis hymnis matutinalibus in lectulo membra posuissem . . . apparuit magister quondam meus et nutritor amantissimus. . . . Vade et dic illis quia, velit nolit, debet ad monasteria Columbæ venire, quia aratra eorum non recte incedunt."—BEDE, v. 9.

often hostile race thus accomplished the task in which Adamnan had failed. He was from the first received by the monks of Iona with the greatest respect; and, employing no means but those afforded him by the delightful suavity of his disposition, the soft and persevering influence of his conversation, and, above all, the example of a life so perfectly conformed to his doctrine, he triumphed over the inveterate dislike of the sons of St Columba for that innovation which was to reunite them to the rest of Christendom. It is not probable that he succeeded at once, since he lived for the thirteen last years of his life at Iona, in the long famous island which he hoped to crown with a new glory by bringing it back into the orbit of Catholic unity. But his victory was complete and final. He died at the age of ninety on Easter-day, the regular celebration of which had preoccupied, excited, and agitated so many saints before him. It fell, in the year of his death, on the 24th April—that is to say, on a day when it had never been and never could be observed, according to the computation followed by the Irish. After having commenced, along with his brethren whom he had the joy to lead back to Catholic unity, to celebrate on earth the greatest solemnity of the liturgical year, he went to complete it in heaven with our Lord, the holy Apostles, and all the citizens of the celestial country, where the eternal celebration ceases no more.[1]

He dies there on Easter-day, 24th April 729.

[1] "Doctor suavissimus . . . libenter auditus ab universis, immutavit

All the monasteries subordinate to Iona followed the example of their metropolitan community in the adoption of the Roman Easter and the orthodox tonsure. There is ground for believing that they accepted at the same time the Benedictine rule, since none of the numerous monks and missionaries sent forth by them into France, and specially into Germany, carried any other rules with them than those of the order of St Benedict.[1]

Ireland thus found itself entirely brought under the laws of Roman discipline. It was by her action, and in her southern provinces, that the first movement of return to unity[2]—a movement carried out by Adamnan with, except in Iona and its dependencies, universal success—had been begun by the Council of 634. The country most distant and least accessible to Roman influence, withdrawn behind Wales and the sea, which made a double rampart for her, was thus the first conquest of the principle of unity.[3] Caledonia, the modern Scotland, represented by the Picts, the farthest north and most untamable of all the populations of the British Isles, soon followed. And, finally, Iona

piis ac sedulis exhortationibus inveteratam illam traditionem parentum eorum. . . . In insula quam ipse velut nova quadam relucente gratia ecclesiasticæ societatis et pacis Christi consecraverat . . . gaudium summæ festivitatis quod cum fratribus quos ad unitatis gratiam converterat, inchoavit, cum Domino et apostolis cæterisque cœli civibus complevit, immo idipsum celebrare sine fine non desinit."—BEDE, v. 22.

[1] MABILLON, in *Præfat. III. Sec. Bened.*, No. 16.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 151.

[3] VARIN, Memoir already quoted.

herself yielded, increasing, by all the numerous family of Columb-kill, the crowded ranks of faithful and obedient children in the Roman Church.[1]

The Britons of Cambria alone resisted; they, the nearest of all, exposed every day to the example, efforts, and persuasions of the orthodox, alone persisted in the customs which they had refused to sacrifice to Augustin. Bede, the illustrious contemporary of those last struggles, grows indignant over this insurmountable obstinacy. He contrasts it with the docility of the Irish and Scotch, and attempts to explain the causes of the difference.[2] "The Scottish nation," he says, "communicated frankly and generously to the Anglo-Saxons, by the ministrations of Aïdan and other missionaries, the truth as far as she knew it; in return, she owes to the Anglo-Saxons the perfect order and regularity which were wanting to her. But the Britons, who had never wished to reveal the Christian religion to the Anglo-Saxons, bury themselves deeper and deeper in their error, now that the English are initiated into all the verities of the Catholic faith.

The Britons of Cambria alone remain obstinately dissident in respect to Easter.

[1] It must be acknowledged that from this moment the influence of this celebrated sanctuary went on diminishing, though it still remained much beyond that of the rest of the Celtic Church.

[2] He admits, however, that in the time of Adamnan the example of Ireland was contagious for a certain number of Britons, v. 17: "Plurima pars Scottorum in Hibernia, *et nonnulla etiam de Britonibus in Britannia*, ecclesiasticum paschalis observantiæ tempus suscepit." The Britons of Cumberland and of Strathclyde, who were more directly under the influence and authority of Northumbrian kings and pontiffs, are probably referred to in this passage.

They hold high their tonsured heads, but not in the form of a crown; and they profess to celebrate the Christian solemnities while separating themselves from the Church of Christ."[1]

Real motive for their resistance.

A little reflection ought to have been sufficient to convince the honest Bede that some other motive than prejudice or religious passion had to do with the infatuated resistance of the Britons; it was the patriotic sentiment which the Anglo-Saxons had mortally wounded, and which Bede himself, like a true Englishman, does not seem to have been able to comprehend as existing in the victims of Saxon invasion. The Anglo-Saxons had never attacked Ireland before the passing incursion of Egfrid. They fought only by intervals, or held themselves upon the defensive against the Picts and Scots of Scotland; while against the Britons war and conflict were perpetual. This war dated from the first landing of the Saxons. It had begun long before the mission of Augustin, and had lasted for three centuries when Bede wrote.[2] It was not then the doctrines or usages of Rome, it was the ecclesiastical supremacy and moral invasion of the Saxons, which the remnant of the British nation, withdrawn within its inaccessible stronghold of Cambria, repelled with the energy of desperation. For a century and a half, up to the moment of Augustin's arrival,

[1] "Ipsi adhuc inveterati et claudicantes in semitis suis, et capita sine corona prætendunt et solemnia Christi sine Ecclesiæ Christi societate venerantur."—BEDE, v. 22.

[2] VARIN, Memoir already quoted.

religion and patriotism had borne an equal part in their horror for the pagan barbarians who had come first to waste, and then to take possession of their native island. They had seen, with equal distrust and repugnance, these savage invaders, whose eternal damnation seemed to them a sort of consolatory justice, gradually introduced into the fold of the Church. By maintaining their ancient customs, by celebrating Easter at a different date, by seeing on the shaven brows of their clergy the distinctive sign of their independent origin and tradition, they testified their incredulity of the Christianity of their enemies, and raised a supreme protest in favour of their own vanquished but not extirpated nationality, before God and man.[1]

Attempts of St Aldhelm to bring

While Wilfrid consumed his life, in the north of England, in a struggle against the enmities which

[1] This is called by Bede, in language too like that which Muscovite writers of our own day employ in respect to the Poles, *a domestic and immoral hatred:* "Britones maxima ex parte domestico sibi odio gentem Anglorum et totius Ecclesiæ catholicæ statum Pascha, minus recte *moribusque improbis* pugnant." There is no just reason for imputing to the British Christians a lower rate of morals than those of the Saxon converts; but our venerable historian, blinded by his passions and prejudices, goes still further, and yields, as so many have done after him, to the hateful temptation of identifying the work of God with a human conquest: "Tamen et divina sibi et humana prorsus resistente virtute, in neutro cupitum possunt obtinere propositum: quippe qui quamvis ex parte sui sunt juris, nonnulla tamen ex parte Anglorum sunt servitio mancipati."—v. 23. He says elsewhere (v. 18) that St Aldhelm wrote: "Librum egregium adversus errorem Britonum, quo vel Pascha non suo tempore celebrant, vel alia *perplura ecclesiasticæ castitati et paci* contraria gerunt." In all Aldhelm's writings that have been preserved to us there is not the least allution to the irregular morals of the Celtic clergy.

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probably fomented and aggravated the opposition of the Celts to his innovations, a celebrated monk named Aldhelm, about his own age, and who died in the same year, distinguished himself by his efforts to lead back the Britons who were subjects of the kingdom of Wessex, or lived on its borders, to Roman unity, as well as to extend and consolidate the Christian faith among the Western Saxons. His fame was too great in the middle ages, and he has been too often quoted in our own day among the pioneers of literature, to be passed over by us without remark.[1] He was descended from that powerful race of Cerdic which traced its genealogy up to the god Woden or Odin,[2] and which reigned over the Saxons of the West until the moment came when it united all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy under its dominion. Aldhelm, who had been devoted from his youth to religious and literary studies, was soon attracted by a school which had just risen in his native kingdom, and of which he was destined to become

[1] Except certain lines in Bede (v. 18), and the biographical details which have been found in Aldhelm's works, we have no contemporary information as to his life. But William of Malmesbury, in the twelfth century, and before him another monk, Faricius, a member of the great monastery of which Aldhelm had been abbot, compiled two separate biographies of the saint, from the traditions of their community. The work of William, which is very curious, has been published by Mabillon and the Bollandists in an abridged form, which was all they themselves knew of it. The complete text is to be found only in the *Anglia Sacra* of Wharton, vol. ii. The literary position of Aldhelm has been ably examined by Lingard (*Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. ii.) and Ozanam (*Etudes Germaniques*, vol. ii. 489).

[2] *Chron. Saxon.*, ad. ann. 552.

the principal glory. A Scottish monk named Maïdulf, moved by the same impulse which led so many Anglo-Saxons to the cloisters and hermitages of Ireland, had come to England to seek a solitude where he could pray and study in peace. He established himself in an immense forest upon the borders of Wessex and Mercia, and lived there as a hermit, sheltered by a hut which he had been allowed to build under the walls of an old castle, a place which had come into the possession of the Saxon kings after having been the dwelling of British chiefs, and was the sole remnant of a British town which the Teutonic conquerors had destroyed.[1] The Celtic solitary, to provide himself with the means of living, opened a school. Any man in our day, in any country in the world except the Far West of America, who should open a school in a wood, would run great risk of dying there of hunger. But at that time such a thirst for instruction had arisen among the Anglo-Saxons, and the fountains at which they could satisfy it were so rare, that the speculation of Maïdulf succeeded perfectly. Scholars came to him in sufficient numbers to enable him shortly to form a community, and among the rest came Aldhelm, first as a pupil and afterwards as a monk.[2] He

[1] *Liber Antiquitatum Meldunensis Cœnobii*, ap. DUGDALE, *Monasticon*. The remembrance of this catastrophe appears to survive in the modern name of *Broken-borough*, not far from Malmesbury.

[2] "Deficientibus necessariis scholares in discipulatum accepit ut eorum liberalitate victus tenuitatem corrigeret. Illi procedenti tem-

He becomes Abbot of Malmesbury.

remained there for fifteen years, was elected abbot on the death of Maïdulf, and by his exertions the foundation of the Celtic anchorite became one of the principal monasteries in England, still, however, bearing the name of the old and saintly stranger whom the Celts were always proud to remember they had given as a master to the great Aldhelm.[1]

His studies at Canterbury.

Before, however, he was called to rule his co-disciples, Aldhelm desired to have the advantage of other instructions than those of his Celtic master. He went repeatedly to Canterbury,[2] where the great monastic schools had taken new life under that Abbot Adrian whom we have already so often referred

669.

to, and who had come from Africa with the Asiatic Archbishop Theodore, to preside over the Catholic education of the Anglo-Saxons. This eminent man, described by a monastic historian four centuries after his death as the master of masters, the fountainhead and centre of letters and arts, gained the heart of Aldhelm by developing the fulness of his intelligence. The young West

pore magistri sequaces ex scholaribus monachi effecti, in conventum non exiguum coaluere."—GUILL. MALMESBUR., *Vita Aldhelmi*, ap. WHARTON, page 3.

[1] *Maildulf's burgh*, whence Malmesbury. "Abbas monasterii quod Mailduſi urbem nuncupavit."—BEDE, v. 18. "A quodam sancto viro de nostro genere nutritus es."—*Epist. Scoti Anonym.*, ap. GILES, p. 98.

[2] It is difficult to conceive how William of Malmesbury could attribute the first training of Aldhelm to the Abbot Adrian. Aldhelm, who died a septuagenarian in 709, must have been at least twenty in 669, the year in which Adrian landed in England. Besides, it is proved that Aldhelm made two distinct visits to Canterbury.

Saxon came out of the hands of his African preceptor furnished with all which then constituted a course of literary and religious instruction.[1] During his entire life he retained a grateful recollection of his teacher, and took pleasure in dating the true birth of his mind from his residence at Canterbury. "It is you, my beloved," he wrote to Adrian, "who have been the venerable teacher of my rude infancy, it is you whom I embrace with the effusion of a pure tenderness, longing much to return to you."[2]

His great literary reputation.

It was thus at Canterbury that Aldhelm acquired that profound knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, that love of Greek, Latin and Hebrew, these literary tastes and habits, which gained him the first place in the universal admiration of his countrymen. Not only contemporaries, such as Bede,[3] but their distant descendants, offered him a homage which has attracted the unaccustomed attention of several modern writers. I am aware that he is the first Saxon whose writings have been preserved,[4] the first man of Teutonic race who cultivated

[1] "Quem in arcem scientiæ stetisse qui Anglorum gesta perleget, intelliget. . . . Fons liberarum vivus artium."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 3.

[2] "Reverendissimo patri meæque rudis infantiæ venerando præceptori. . . . Mi charissime, quem gratia puræ dilectionis amplector."—ALDHELMI *Opera*, p. 330, ed. Giles.

[3] "Vir undecumque doctissimus: nam et sermone nitidus, et scripturarum tam liberalium quam ecclesiasticarum erat eruditione mirandus."—BEDE, v. 18.

[4] "Constat neminem nostræ stirpis prosapia genitum, et Germanicæ gentis cunabulis confotum, in hujuscemodi negocio ante nostram mediocritatem tantopere desudasse."—*Epist. ad Acircium*, ed. Giles, p. 327.

the Latin muse, as he boasts in applying to himself while still very young these lines of Virgil:—

"Primus ego in patriam mecum, modo vita supersit,
Aonio rediens deducam vertice Musas.
Primus Idumæas referam tibi, Mantua, palmas."

But I cannot but think that his literary importance has been singularly exaggerated. Of all the Fathers of the Church, or even of ecclesiastical writers generally, I know none whose productions are more wearisome. He has neither the fiery originality of Ceadmon nor the eloquent and elegant simplicity of Bede. He is certainly well-informed for his time, and is not without a certain warmth of feeling when his mind is not frozen by pedantic formalism. Sometimes he applies happily texts from the Bible, and in his famous essays in prose and verse upon virgins and virginity he shows himself thoroughly instructed in sacred and ecclesiastical history. His verses, rhymed and unrhymed, are a little better than his prose, but still are destitute of any special charm or brilliancy, notwithstanding the pompous affectation of his images and metaphors. But in verse and in prose, this Teuton, in whom it would be pleasant to find something wild and primitive, delights in literary sleight-of-hand, in acrostics, in enigmas, in alliterations, in a play upon words, and a childish and grotesque redundance of expression[1]—in short, in all

[1] I refer those who may think me too severe, and who may not have at hand the convenient volume published by Dr Giles, to the extracts from St Aldhelm given by Lingard and Ozanam.

the paltry refinements of the Greek and Latin decadence.

We should judge him no doubt more leniently if we were acquainted with his Anglo-Saxon works, which must have contributed largely to his popular reputation. But of these there remains to us only a vague recollection, associated with the most curious and touching feature of his youth. What would not one give to have the actual text of those canticles and ballads which he sang upon the bridges and at the wayside corners, lying in wait for the Saxon peasants who left church in haste as soon as mass was over to avoid the sermon? Appearing before them as a musician, one of their ordinary bards, he attempted no doubt to teach them, under that popular and fascinating form of utterance, the same truths of religion which it wearied them to hear from the pulpit.[1] These songs in the vernacular tongue retained their popularity for several centuries, and gained for Aldhelm the honour of being proclaimed prince of Anglo-Saxon poetry by the great King Alfred.

His Anglo-Saxon songs intended to take the place of sermons.

The most striking particular in the history and writings of Aldhelm is the view they afford us of

Literary life in the Saxon

[1] "Litteris ad plenum instructus, nativæ quoque linguæ non negligebat carmina, adeo ut, teste libro Ælfredi . . . nulla unquam ætate par fuerit quisquam, poesim Anglicam posse facere vel canere. . . . Carmen triviale quod adhuc vulgo cantitatur fecisse. . . . Populum eo tempore semi-barbarum, parum divinis sermonibus intentum statim cantatis missis domos cursitare solitum; ideo sanctum virum super pontem qui rura et urbem continuat, abeuntibus se opposuisse obicem, quasi artem canendi professum. . . . Hoc commento sensim inter ludicra verbis scripturarum insertis, cives ad sanitatem reduxisse."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 4.

cloisters in the seventh century.

the literary and intellectual life, developed as it were in a moment, in the Saxon cloisters, almost before their completion, by an inspiring breath, at once Catholic and classic, from Italy and the East. The same phenomenon had been apparent two centuries earlier in the Irish monasteries under an inspiration more original but less easy to study. This literary life had its clouds and its pettinesses, its pretentious and affected aspect. But such a blossoming of human thought, of study and knowledge, of poetry and eloquence, in the bosom of a barbarous and warlike race, still apparently absorbed by war, invasions, dynastic and domestic revolutions, and all the storms and blunders which characterise the childhood of society, is not the less a great and wonderful sight.

Extent and variety of Aldhelm's knowledge.

The good and evil sides of this development could not be better manifested than in the person of St Aldhelm, and especially in the extent and variety of his information. He was an excellent musician, and studied eagerly all the instruments known in his day.[1] What was still more rare, he had studied Roman law,[2] happily ignored by all the other Anglo-Saxon monks and men of letters, even including the venerable Bede, whose learning

[1] "Omnia instrumenta quæ fidibus vel fistulis aut aliis varietatibus melodiæ fieri possunt . . . in quotidiano usu habuit."—FABRICIUS, *Vita Aldhelm.*, ap. BOLLAND., t. vi. Maii, p. 83.

[2] He himself states this in a letter to his predecessor Hedda, ed. Giles, p. 96. Compare LAPPENBERG, i. 196. I do not know how Palgrave discovered the existence somewhere of a manuscript treatise of Aldhelm upon Roman law, which, in 1832, he hoped soon to publish.

seemed universal. He was acquainted, as has been seen, with the three sacred languages, and knew enough of Hebrew to read the Bible in the original. He not only read Greek, but spoke and pronounced it like an ancient Greek, according to the two professors whom King Ina, cousin of Aldhelm, brought from Greece to aid him in his studies. As for Latin, it occupied him only too much. He makes wearisome dissertations upon the minute details of grammar, prosody, and metrical rules, and quotes to extremity Virgil and Lucan, Persius and Terence, Horace and Juvenal; he even quotes Juvencus and the Priapeia!

His constant solicitude for souls.

At the same time, his literary or classical occupations never made him lose sight of the exigencies or perils of the soul. In a letter which has been often quoted, he warns one of his countrymen who was going to study in Ireland against the dangers of pagan philosophy, and, above all, of mythology. "What fruit," he asks, "can orthodox truth derive from the studies of a man who spends his strength in examining into the incests of the impure Proserpine, the adventures of the petulant Hermione, the bacchanals of Lupercus, or the parasites of Priapus? All that has vanished; it has become as nothing before the Cross, victorious over death."[1]

[1] "Quidnam, rogitum quæso, orthodoxæ fidei sacramento commodi affert circa temeratum spurcæ Proserpinæ incestum . . . enucleate legendo scrutendoque sordescere . . . quæ . . . alma mortis morte stipite patibuli affixa, solo tenus diruta evanuere."—*Epist. ad Wilfrid.*, ed. Giles, p. 337.

This anxiety for the salvation of souls, which he gives as the motive of all his works, reveals itself especially in his correspondence. For example, here are certain expressions in a letter which might have been addressed yesterday to the youth, half clerical, half noble, of the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge—so unchanging is the Anglo-Saxon nature in its vices as in its virtues: "Dear Ethelwald, who are at once my son and my disciple, you are still very young; but, I entreat you, do not let yourself be too much in bondage to the vain pleasures of this world. Avoid carefully daily excesses in drinking, long and endless repasts, even riding-parties too much prolonged, and every other miserable sensual delight.[1] I implore you also not to let yourself be overcome by the love of money or of vainglory, or by that secular boasting which is odious to God. Consecrate rather your time, my beloved, to the study of the Scriptures and to prayer; and if you wish, in addition, to study secular literature, do it with the special intention of understanding better the sacred text, the meaning of which depends almost everywhere on the understanding of the rules of grammar. Put this letter among your other books, that you may read it over and over again."

[1] "Sive in quotidianis potationibus et conviviis usu frequentiore ac prolixiore inhoneste superfluis, sive in equitandi vagatione culpabili. . . . Seu in quibuslibet corporeæ delectationis voluptatibus execrandis. . . . Multo magis, mi amantissime, vel lectionibus divinis, vel orationibus sacris semper invigila."—P. 332, ed. Giles.

In dedicating his voluminous treatise on Latin versification, after twenty years' absence, to the chief[1] of a Northumbrian or Scottish tribe who had been his companion in his studies, and had become his spiritual son, he insists warmly that the poor prince, whom he calls his "very reverend son," should consider it a duty to read the wearisome volume from beginning to end. He expatiates at length upon the trouble which his production had cost him in the midst of his pastoral cares, and the convulsions of the age. "It would be absurd," he says, "if you did not take the trouble to eat what I have taken so much pains to grind and make into bread."[2] Then he invokes the example of the great Emperor Theodosius, who, while ruling the world, found time to copy the eighteen books of the grammarian Priscian. But he adds: "Let not the sound of the trumpet of the last judgment depart from your ears; let it recall to you day and night the book of the law, which ought to be meditated day and night. You will never sin if you think always of your last end. What is our prosperity here below? a dream, a vapour, the foam on the sea. God grant that the possession of present good may not hold to us the place of future

[1] It is not known who this Acircius was, whom he describes pompously as "Aquilonalis imperii sceptra gubernanti," but whom he reminds that they contracted in their youth "inextricabile conglutinati fœderis pignus."

[2] "Absurdum nempe arbitror si . . . illud te pigeat velut insolescentem ac delicatum paulatim masticare ac ruminare, quod me non piguit, utpote pistoris pinsentis officio functum, commolere et tollere."—P. 328, ed. Giles.

recompense, and that the abundance of that which perishes may not be followed by the dearth of that which endures. I ask this for you and for myself, from Him who for us has hung upon the cross."[1]

The rare fragments of his correspondence are at the same time the only evidence by which the heart of Aldhelm can be estimated; and his heart seems to us to have been much superior to his intelligence. A tenderness and kindness are here visible, which, in the person of a monk of barbarous race, are much more touching and attractive than all his rhetoric and learning. We perceive with pleasure that his soul was neither inflated nor disturbed by his great and increasing reputation, nor by the crowd of disciples and admirers who came to him, not only from the Britannic Isles, but also from Greece and Spain. He continued always the same mild and affectionate spirit which, while passionately studying prosody, astronomy, and Roman law, at Canterbury, wrote to his bishop lamenting that he could not celebrate Christmas in the joyous company of his brethren of Malmesbury, and charging him to salute tenderly in his name all the brethren, from the first to the last.[2]

[1] "Propterea cœlestis tubæ clangor. . . . Utinam caducarum copia, secutarum non sit inopia . . . quod præstare dignetur, qui pro nobis in patibulo pependit."—*Ibid.*

[2] "Fateor me decrevisse. . . . Natalis Domini solemnitatem in consortio fratrum tripudians celebrare. . . . Salutate in Christo omnem sodalium meorum catervam a minimo usque ad maximum."

His popularity.

These features of his character explain the great popularity which he enjoyed in his own country. It was such that when he returned from his journeys, he was met not only by a long procession of monks with chants and incense, but also by a crowd of laymen, who formed themselves into a kind of rhythmic dance in his honour.[1]

After this prolonged discussion of the literary position held by Aldhelm, it is necessary to recall to our readers that the great point of interest for us is his monastic life, and his connection with the Celtic dissidents.

His great monastic life.

This indifferent writer was a great monk. He divided his life between study and prayer, but study was for him only a succession of conversations with God. "When I read," he said, "it is God who speaks to me; when I pray, it is to God that I speak."[2] Like his contemporaries, Wilfrid and the holy abbots of the Northumbrian coast, he professed and extended the rule of St Benedict, whose praises he has written in his poem in honour of Virgins, and whom he does not hesitate to regard as the first author of the conversion of England, his disciples having been its earliest missionaries.[3]

[1] "Venienti occursum est ubique magna pompa, longo apparatu salutantium. . . . Laicorum pars pedibus plaudunt choreas; pars diversis corporum gestibus internas pandunt lætitias."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 19.

[2] "Lectionibus frequenter, orationibus instanter incumbebat, ut sicut ipse in quadam epistola dicebat, legens Deum alloquentem audiret, orans Deum alloqueretur."—*Ibid.*, p. 13.

[3] We quote the lines for the satisfaction of our readers. They con-

He thus substituted the teachings and traditions of Canterbury for the influence of his first Celtic master. This, however, was not prompted by self-indulgence, for he continued, as did Wilfrid himself, faithful to the great austerities which characterised Irish monastic life. Aldhelm imposed upon himself the same extraordinary penances as were habitual to the Celtic monks. To subdue the impulses of the flesh he would plunge during the night into a fountain near the monastery, and there remain immersed to the neck, till he had said the Psalter, and this in winter as in summer. The fountain long retained his name, and the memory of his wonderful austerities.[1] I suppose he is the sole poet, the sole philosopher, of whom such recollections have been preserved.

His zeal for preaching.

But he was far from concentrating his zeal within the narrow enclosure of his monastery. It was he

tain the first homage ever offered by a Teutonic pen to St Benedict and his institution :—

"Temporibus faustus Benedictus claruit isdem,
Quem Deus Ausoniæ clemens indulserat auctor. . . .
Primo qui statuit nostræ certamina vitæ,
Qualiter optatam teneant cœnobia normam,
Quoque modo properet directo tramite sanctus,
Ad supera scandens cœlorum culmina cultor;
Cujus præclaram pandens ab origine vitam
Grægorius præsul chartis descripserat olim,
Donec æthralem felix migraret in arcem.
Hujus alumnorum numero glomeramus ovantes,
Quos gerit in grèmio fœcunda Britannia cives,
A quo jam nobis baptismi gratia fluxit,
Atque magistrorum veneranda caterva cucurrit."
*De Laudibus Virginum*, p. 159.

[1] "Ut vim rebelli corpori conscinderet, fonti se humero tenus immergebat. Ibi nec glacialem in hyeme frigorem, nec æstate nebulas ex locis palustribus halantes, curans. . . . Fons ille . . . in valle cœnobii lenibus scatebris fluens."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 13.

who, by his preaching, completed the conquest of Wessex, the kingdom which, a hundred years after his death, was to absorb the other seven kingdoms of the Heptarchy. This work was long and laborious. The people seem to have been Christian only in name: they neither listened to the priests nor attended the churches. Aldhelm employed all the resources of his eloquence to attract them. He even went to the fairs and marketplaces, mingled with the groups of buyers and sellers, and succeeded, by his persuasive addresses, in making them leave their merchandise for the moment, and follow him to the church, where he fed them with the bread of the divine Word.[1]

He interferes in favour of Wilfrid.

His anxiety for the good of souls and the honour of the Church extended even beyond his native province. He was not indifferent, as were so many other holy bishops and abbots of his time, to the noble struggles of Wilfrid. One of his letters still exists, addressed to the numerous members of Wilfrid's clergy who had abandoned their pontiff in the midst of his trials, and who, during his exile, sought the favour of his persecutors. "I entreat you on my knees," wrote Ald-

[1] "Illius provinciæ populus, perversus opere, quamvis subditus fidei nostræ, ecclesiam non frequentabat, nec sacerdotum curabat imperium: quem vir blandus verbis monens suavibus. . . . Mercatorum ex diversis patribus multitudo congregabatur maxima: cui pater iste extra urbem veniebat obviando. . . . Quidam eorem . . . pro quibus venerant relinquentes ad tempus mercimonia . . . post hæc . . . repedabant ad propria, animabus suis divino prius officio saginatis." — BOLLAND., t. vi. Maii, p. 85.

helm, "not to allow yourselves to be disturbed by the hurricane which has just shaken the foundations of your Church, the sound of which has echoed even to us. If it is needful, take courage to leave the country of your fathers with your bishop, and follow him into exile. What pain, what labour should ever be allowed to separate you from him who has fed you, trained you, carried you in his arms and on his breast, with so tender a charity? . . . Look at the men of the world, who are strangers to all knowledge of divine things. What would be said of laymen who, after having loved and served their lord in his prosperity, should abandon him when he fell into misfortune and poverty? What would be said of those who should prefer the repose of their own hearths, instead of joining themselves to the misery and exile of their prince? By what a universal explosion of laughter, of contempt, and execration, would not they be overwhelmed? And you too, you priests, what will not be said of you if you allow the bishop who ordained you to go alone into banishment?"[1] We are not informed what was the effect of this letter; but it is not the less curious to behold our Anglo-Saxon abbot, worthy

[1] "Vos viscerales contribulos, flexis genuum poplitibus, subnixa exposco prece. . . . Ecce seculares divinæ scientiæ extorres, si devotum dominum quem in prosperitate dilexerunt . . . deseruerint. . . . Nonne execrabiles cachinni ridiculo et gannaturæ strepitu ab omnibus ducuntur? Quid ergo de vobis dicetur?" etc.—*Epistola ad Clerum Wilfridi Episcopi*, p. 335.

descendant of Odin, invoking to the aid of episcopal authority, and endeavouring to awake in the breasts of his priestly brethren, that tradition of personal devotion, that passionate sentiment of fealty to prince and lord, of which the Anglo-Saxons have left us so many touching examples.

Aldhelm was the true founder of Malmesbury, of which he was abbot for thirty years. It was to him it owed the powerful and popular existence which lasted till an advanced period in the middle ages; and he attracted to it an immense crowd of monks and students.[1] By the grandeur and variety of his buildings, he made it the most magnificent edifice which then existed in England. The sympathy which existed between him and the kings and nobles of Wessex and Mercia procured vast territorial gifts to the monastery situated on the borders of the two kingdoms. The abbatial demesne, which contained only thirty dairies[2] when he became abbot, included more than four hundred at his death. In order to protect the liberty and property of the community as much as possible from lay or ecclesiastical cupidity, he went to Rome, with the consent of the kings of Mercia and Wessex, and obtained from Pope Sergius I. an act of privilege

He goes to Rome to obtain the privilege of exemption. 687-701.

[1] "Currebatur ad Aldhelmum totis semitis: his vitæ sanctimoniam, illis litterarum scientiam desiderantibus. . . . Tunc res monasterii in immensum augeri."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 10.

[2] I translate thus the *cassatos* of William, which I suppose to be equivalent to the more usual term *casata*.

which placed the Monastery of Malmesbury and its dependencies under the special protection of the Holy See, and guaranteed to them an absolute independence of all secular or episcopal authority.[1] When he became a bishop, Aldhelm took pains to have this exemption confirmed, with all requisite solemnity, by his cousin, King Ina.

He becomes a bishop. 705.

For he too became a bishop towards the end of his life, and in spite of all his efforts to be delivered from this burden. On the death of the bishop of the West Saxons, Hedda, the plan of Archbishop Theodore was brought into operation to divide his vast diocese into two. A new bishopric was created at Sherburne, which still, however, was of much too vast extent, since it included almost all the south-west of England to the point of Cornwall, which the West Saxons had not yet completely conquered.[2] Aldhelm was

[1] The authenticity of the Act given by William has been contested, but the fact of the exemption does not seem doubtful. On this subject the Bollandists say, "Tales exemptiones (from episcopal jurisdiction), licet eo tempore rariores, non omnino inusitatas fuisse ostendit eruditissimus Mabilio, *de Re diplomatica*, l. i. c. 3, ex quibus corrigas quæ alibi forte in contrarium diximus." Our readers will not wish us to enter into the coarse fables, little to the honour of the Papacy, which the biographers of Aldhelm have mingled with the narrative of his journey to Rome, nor to the extraordinary trial which the holy author of the *Eulogy of Virginity*, like Robert d'Arbrissel at a later period, imposed upon himself to prove his victory over his senses. "Quomodo," says Henschenius, with reason, "monacho id credam fuisse permissum?" And it is well to add, as Malmesbury says on another occasion, "Non enim eget Aldhelmus ut mendaciis asseratur."

[2] The seat of the ancient diocese continued at Winchester. That of Sherburne was shortly afterwards transferred to Sarum or Salisbury. It comprehended the six existing counties of Wilts, Berks, Somerset, Dor-

called to this new diocese. After his promotion it was his desire that the monks of his different communities[1]—or, as he said, his families—should proceed, in all freedom, to the election of a new abbot; but they obstinately refused to give him a successor. To his reiterated requests they answered, "As long as you live, we will live with you and under you. But one thing we ask of you unanimously. It is, to guarantee to us, by the Holy Scriptures and the consent of the powerful, that after your death neither king, nor bishop, nor any man whatsoever, ecclesiastic or layman, may exercise over us an authority which we are not willing to accept."[2] Aldhelm procured an acknowledgment of the perpetual freedom of the monastery, which he continued to rule, from his cousin King Ina, from his colleague the Bishop of Winchester, and from all the clergy of Wessex assembled in synod. He then went to Canterbury to be consecrated by the former companion of his studies, the Archbishop Brithwald, successor of the great Theodore.

But nevertheless continues Abbot of Malmesbury.

A curious incident is associated with this journey.

set, Devonshire, and Cornwall. It was afterwards subdivided, and the two additional dioceses of Bath and Exeter taken from it.

[1] There were three of these—Malmesbury, Frome, and Bradford, the two latter having sprung from the former.

[2] "Abbatem quem sibi spontanea voce familiarum mearum optio, consona voce elegisset. . . . Ut nullus post obitum tuum nec regalis audacitas, nec pontificalis auctoritas, vel aliquid ecclesiasticæ seu secularis dignitatis vir, sine nostro voluntatis arbitrio, in nobis sibi vindicet principatum." — *Epist. Aldhelmi de Libertate Propriæ Electionis,* ap. GUILL. MALMESB., BOLLAND., and GILES, p. 350.

When Aldhelm was at Canterbury he learned that ships from France, from the land of the Morins, had touched at Dover. On receiving this news he went to Dover, hoping to find among their cargoes books or other articles of use to his church. And, in fact, he did discover among the merchandise displayed upon the shore many books, and one in particular, of which, after having carefully examined it, he asked the price. The sailors, seeing him so poorly clad, laughed at him, and pushed him roughly away. Soon after a storm broke out, endangering the anchored ship. Aldhelm threw himself into a boat (like the generous sailors in the lifeboats at the present day), to aid the crew of the threatened vessel. At his prayer the waves calmed down, and their lives were saved; the sailors, confused and deeply touched, then gave him the book he desired. It was a complete Bible, the Old and New Testaments, which he carried with him as a precious treasure to Malmesbury.[1] This anecdote is not without interest in connection with the history of material and intellectual commerce in England; it shows, too, that so far from interdicting the study

[1] "Spatiabatur sanctus juxta mare, intentosque oculos mercimoniis infigebat, si quid forte commodum ecclesiastico usui attulissent nautæ qui e Gallico sinu in Angliam provecti librorum copiam apportassent. Conspicatus librum totius Testamenti Veteris et Novi seriem continentem. . . . Cum gnarus folia volveret, pretium effringeret, barbari eum nautica lascivia conviciis aggrediuntur. . . . Mox ipse in scapha ascensa virtute remigum periclitantes adisset, mutata in bonum."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 20. Cf. BOLLAND., *loco cit.*, p. 8. This Bible was still in existence at Malmesbury in the time of the historian—more than four centuries after the death of Aldhelm.

of the Bible, as the modern English so blindly accuse her of doing, the Church, from the most primitive times, has neglected no occasion of spreading the knowledge of it.

The episcopate of Aldhelm lasted only four years, which he passed in continual journeys through his vast diocese, preaching day and night. He died in the same year as his master, the famous African abbot, Adrian of Canterbury, and his illustrious contemporary, Wilfrid of York. Death surprised him, as it did the holy apostle of Northumberland,[1] in a village,[2] during one of his apostolic journeys. According to his own desire, he drew his last breath in the little wooden church to which he had come to preach the word of God; the stone on which he laid his dying head was shown long afterwards.

Death of Aldhelm. 25th May 709.

Such was the man to whom all agree in attributing the principal part in putting down what has been called the schism in the west and south of

What he did to bring back the Celtic dissidents.

[1] See vol. iv. p. 45.

[2] At Dulting in Somersetshire. "In prædicationibus noctes perinde ac dies continuans, dioeceses non segniter circumiens. . . . Lignea erat ecclesia, in qua se ultimum spirans afferre jussit."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 23. Eight centuries after his death his feast was still celebrated at Malmesbury by such a crowd of worshippers that, according to Camden, the presence of a troop of soldiers, *cohors militum*, was necessary to prevent disorder. Then came the Reformation of Henry VIII., with its usual train of devastations. The magnificent church of Malmesbury would have been razed to the ground had not a weaver bought it from the king to establish his looms there. The monastery was sacked. The precious MSS. of his library were long employed to fill up broken windows in the neighbouring houses, or to light the bakers' fires.—MAITLAND'S *Dark Ages*, p. 281.

Great Britain. It is interesting to search out in his writings, as in his life, all the traces of his connection with the Celts. They are, however, few in number, and seem all connected either with his first education under the Celtic Maïdulf, or his consequent literary studies. He receives pompous compliments from several Irishmen, one of whom requests from him the loan of a book, and afterwards that he would receive him as a disciple, sending him a specimen of Latin verses, and announcing that he could easily find horses and a servant for the journey if Aldhelm's answer was favourable.[1] Another, exiled, as he describes it, in the most distant corner of the Frankish kingdom, beside the tomb of his holy countryman Fursy (at Lagny-sur-Marne), begs him, whom he calls the Archimandrite of the Saxons, to send him his Latin panegyrics.[2] At another time, it is the son of a Scottish king, learned in the literature of his time, who sends all his works to Aldhelm, in order that the file of so accomplished a genius may rub off the Scottish rust from them.[3] Then we find him, in his own person, congratulating one of his Anglo-

[1] "Domino sancto, sapientissimo, Christo quidem carissimo Aldhelmo Scotus ignoti nominis in Deo æterno salutem," etc.—P. 98, ed. Giles.

[2] "Domino lectricibus ditato studiis mellifluisque ornato lucubratiunculis, Aldhelmo Archimandritæ Saxonum. . . . Cellanus in Hibernensi insula natus, in extremo Francorum limitis latens angulo exul." Aldhelm answers: "Miror quod me tantillum homunculum de famoso et florigero Francorum rure vestræ fraternitatis industria interpellat Saxonicæ prolis prosapia genitum."—P. 331, ed. Giles.

[3] "Arcivillum regis Scotiæ filium. . . . Ut perfecti ingenii lima eraderetur scabredo Scotica."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 4.

Saxon friends on his return from foggy Ireland, after having studied there for six years. On this occasion he gives us an emphatic picture of the constant journeys of English students, who filled whole fleets going and coming to Ireland, in order to examine deeply, not only into the secrets of grammar, geometry, and physical science, but also into all the different interpretations of Scripture, "as if," he says, "there was a failure of Greek and Latin masters in green and fertile England to explain the obscurities of the celestial library to all who desire to know them." Then he instances his dear master Adrian, of ineffable urbanity, and the metropolitan Theodore, whom he represents surrounded by a troop of Irish disciples, like a wild boar surrounded by a crowd of furious dogs, holding them back, as by strokes of his tusks, by the nervous vigour of his dialectics, and the close ranks of his syllogisms.[1]

In all this there is no allusion to the religious differences which separated the Celts from the Anglo-Saxons, an omission which is of itself a new proof of the reconciliation already effected between the Irish

[1] "Ex Hiberniæ brumosis insulæ climatibus. . . . Tam creber meatus est (istinc illincque, istuc illucque) navigero æquoreas fretantium calle gurgites. . . . Cur Hibernia quo catervatim istinc lectores classibus advecti confluunt . . . ac si istic, fœcundo Britanniæ in cespite, didascali Argivi Romanive quirites minime reperiri queant. . . . Etiamsi Theodorus, Hibernensium globo discipulorum (seu aper truculentus Molossorum catasta ringente vallatus), stipetur; limato perniciter grammatico dente rebelles phalanges discutit," etc.—P. 92-94, ed. Giles; Cf. OZANAM, *op. cit.*, 492. This letter must have been written before 690, the date of Theodore's death.

Celts and the Anglo-Saxon clergy, while the British Celts remained obstinate in their distinct and even hostile observances. Since the great victories of the Northumbrian kings it was specially the West Saxons who carried on the struggle against the Britons who had taken refuge in the mountainous peninsulas of Cambria and Cornwall, and whose unwearied resistance was no doubt seconded in an unforeseen and often dangerous way by the other Britons scattered through the districts already con-
About 690. quered by the Saxons. After one of these wars or insurrections, more cruel than usual, the national assembly of the West Saxons deliberated long over the measures it would be best to take by way of getting rid of one of the principal obstacles to the fusion of the two races, by leading back the vanquished Britons to unity in respect to paschal observances. The discussion lasted several days. At last, starting from the principle that no force must be employed, but solely reason and persuasion, it was resolved that Abbot Aldhelm, who was as blameless in life as in doctrine, should be charged to teach them the true laws of the Church, and to end the schism, for the honour of his country, as well as for the common salvation.[1] A national council (probably that of

[1] "Tunc rebellionem meditantes Kentuinus rex tam anxia cæde perdomuit, ut nihil ulterius sperarent. . . . Hinc frequenter West-Saxonum conventus, crebri cœtus coacti . . . sententia per plures dies multo verborum agmine volutata, nunc finem habuit: non vi cogendos schismaticos sed rationibus ducendos. . . . Ambitur precibus B. vir, ut hunc laborem impendat . . . patriæ laudi et cunctorum in commune saluti."—GUILL. MALMESB., p. 14. Cf. BOLLAND, *l. c.*, p. 87.

Becancelde), at which almost all the Anglo-Saxon clergy were represented, confirmed the mission which the Abbot of Malmesbury had received from his countrymen. He accepted the task with his usual charity. Without adventuring his person in the midst of these refractory tribes, he addressed himself to their chiefs and clergy in writing. An unexpected success attended his efforts. Of all that he wrote on this subject there remains to us only one letter, addressed to a petty British king who still maintained his independence in Cornwall, at the extreme point of southern England. He draws in it a striking picture of the religious separation, of the moral repulsion, which still at the end of the seventh century rose like a wall between the two races — between the victors and the vanquished. "Beyond the mouth of the Severn," he says, "the priests of Cambria, proud of the purity of their morals, have such a horror of communication with us that they refuse to pray with us in the churches, or to seat themselves at the same table; more than this, what is left from our meals is thrown to dogs and swine, the dishes and bottles we have used have to be rubbed with sand, or purified by fire, before they will condescend to touch them. The Britons give us neither the salutation nor the kiss of peace; and if one of us went to live in their country, the natives would hold no communication with him till after he had been made to endure a penance of forty days."

Letter of Abbot Aldhelm to the British king of Cornwall. 692 or 698.

Aldhelm then enlarges upon the cruel scandal of such struggles and hatreds in the Church of Christ. He discusses in succession the question of the tonsure and that of paschal observance. "We entreat you on our knees," he says, "in view of our future and common country in heaven, and of the angels, our future fellow-countrymen—we adjure you not to persevere in your arrogant contempt of the decrees of St Peter, and the traditions of the Roman Church, by a proud and tyrannical attachment to the statutes of your ancestors. . . . Whatever may be the perfection of good works, they are unprofitable out of the Catholic Church, alike to cenobites, however faithfully they may follow their rule, and to anchorites hidden in the wildest solitudes. To sum up everything in one word, it is vain for any man to take credit to himself for belonging to the Catholic faith so long as he rejects the doctrine and rule of St Peter. For the foundation of the Church and the consolidation of the faith, placed first in Christ and secondly in St Peter, wavers not before the assaults of any tempest. It is on Peter that the Truth himself conferred the privilege of the Church, saying, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.'"[1]

[1] "Geruntio regi, simulque cunctis Dei sacerdotibus per Domnonia conversantibus. . . . Nuper cum enim in concilio episcoporum ex tota pene Britannia innumerabilis Dei sacerdotum caterva confluxit. . . . Demetarum sacerdotes de privata propriæ conversationis munditia gloriantes nostram communionem magnopere abominantur . . . reliquias epularum lurconum canum rictibus et immundis devorandos porcis projiciunt. Vascula quoque et phialas. . . . Propter communem cœlestis patriæ sor-

It is generally admitted that the zeal and eloquence of Aldhelm led back to orthodox rule a great many Britons, especially those who lived under the daily extending sway of the kings of Wessex.[1] But even the narratives most favourable to him make it apparent that all did not yield. The greater part of those who retained their independence beyond the Severn remained, according to all appearance, inaccessible to his efforts.

The Britons of Cambria, who had resisted the efforts of Saxon missionaries, adopt the orthodox Easter in obedience to the voice of

When at length they yielded, it was not to the preaching or influence of a stranger. The victory which neither the learned Saxon abbot nor the great Roman missionary could win, was the work of a native prelate. Elbod, Bishop of Bangor, a Briton by birth, succeeded, not without much resistance, in introducing the Roman computation,

tem et angelicæ sodalitatis collegium . . . flexis poplitibus . . . suppliciter efflagitamus ut . . . traditionem Ecclesiæ Romanæ propter prisca priorum statuta vestrorum nequaquam tyrannica freti pertinacia arroganter aspernemini. . . . Petro autem veritas ita privilegium sanxit Ecclesiæ."—P. 83-89, ed. Giles. Two words little used in the seventh century—*barones* and *katharos*—the first applied to military chiefs, the second to heretics who thought themselves purer than their neighbours—will be remarked in this curious letter.

[1] "Scripsit, jubente synodo suæ gentis, librum egregium adversus errorem Britonum . . . multosque eorum qui occidentalibus Saxonibus subditi erant Britones, ad catholicam Dominici Paschæ celebrationem hujus lectione perduxit."—BEDE, v. 18. It is difficult to believe with Mabillon that this *librum egregium* was nothing else than the letter to the King of Cornwall which has just been quoted. The monastic historians of Malmesbury attribute greater results to Aldhelm's work than does Bede. "Ad Dominicæ fidei regulam, et ipsos præsules et innumeram populi revocavit multitudinem."—BOLLAND., *l. c.*, p. 85. "Debent usque hodie correctionem suam Aldhelmo; quamvis pro insita nequitia et virum non agnoscant et volumen pessumdederint."—GUILL. MALMESB., ap. WHARTON, p. 15.

one of their own bishops.

first in North Cambria, and afterward in the southern part of the province, towards the end of the

770. eighth century.[1] From that date there is no longer any question of dissent between the two Churches. In everything belonging to worship and faith, the Cambrian Britons, while still defending their independence with jealous pride, were henceforward at one with the Anglo-Saxons.[2] Like them, they went in crowds to Rome, their kings at their head,[3] swelling the armies of pilgrims who mingled at the foot of the chair of Peter their aspirations, their enmities, their diversities of race, but who returned with the lawful assurance that the supreme advantage of catholic unity exacted no sacrifice of truly national independence, right, or tradition.

Thus the different centres of that Celtic dissidence which has been so unjustly called schism, were successively overcome; and thus finished, upon the ground of religion, though only to begin

[1] "Anno DCCLXX. Pascha mutatur apud Britones, emendante Elbod, homine Dei."—*Ann. Eccl. Menevensis*, in *Anglia Sacra*, vol. ii. p. 648. Cf. AUGUSTIN THIERRY, *Histoire de la Conquête d'Angleterre*, t. i. p. 87.

[2] This has been perfectly demonstrated by F. Walter (*Das alte Wales*, p. 232), against the childishly absurd affirmations of Roberts, Gieseler, and even of Lappenberg. All that can be admitted is, that the Cambrian bishops, who had their own metropolitan see either at *Menevia* (St David's) or at Llandaff, did not recognise the metropolitan rights conferred by St Gregory upon Augustin. The question was definitely settled only by Innocent III., who placed the Cambrian bishops under the authority of Canterbury.

[3] Cadwallader is noted as one of the Welsh kings who met the Anglo-Saxon kings at Rome in the year 680, but the assertion rests upon a doubtful tradition, while the pilgrimages of Howell and Cyngus in the ninth century, like that of Howell the Good in the tenth, rest upon more satisfactory authority.

over again and perpetuate itself elsewhere, the long struggle between the Celts and the Saxons. According to the common fate of human conflicts and passions, all this tumult died away into silence and forgetfulness, as the Rhine disappears obscurely in the sand and marshes of Holland after its majestic and sometimes stormy waters have swept through so many famous lands proud of, and blessed by, its presence.

In casting a last glance upon these prolonged contests, so insignificant at bottom, yet so seriously affecting national influences and interests, and animated by the passions, talents, and virtues of their principal champions,—the wisdom, I may even add, the grave beauty, of the language used by him who was the greatest monk of the greatest age, will be profoundly admired.

"This dispute regarding the date of a day," says our Mabillon, "occupied the Church for six centuries, and it required three of these centuries to restore union. Human nature takes back in this kind of controversy its downward inclination. The heat of warfare and the passion of success take possession of the soul under the cover of religion; and as they know no limits, it often happens that the laws of Christian charity are sacrificed to questions of purely human invention. In such cases, no one is permitted to disobey the judgment of the Church; but it is important that the pastors of the Church should use their authority with so

much moderation as not imprudently to provoke feeble spirits too much attached to their own opinions into revolt, thus producing the greatest evils from an insignificant cause."[1]

At the same time, this generous son of St Benedict congratulates himself with reason that the Benedictines had the honour of leading back to unity the Scots and Britons so long separated for so small a matter from the Roman Church.

It must be recollected at the same time that, during all the seventh century, the Celtic or British Church was much more extensive than the British nation. The nation was concentrated in Cambria and in the neighbouring peninsulas; the Church embraced, besides the western coast of England, all Ireland and Scotland, without mentioning the Irish colonies in Gaul and Belgium. Let us repeat that the opposition which rose in that Church against conformity to Roman rites and usages was exactly proportioned to the degree of patriotic resistance excited by the invasion of the Saxons, behind whom appeared the Roman missionaries. This resistance was desperate among the British Christians, who retained the memory or

[1] "Sic unius diei quæstio Ecclesiam detinuit per annos fere sexcentos: et tria minimum sæcula vix fuerunt satis componendæ hominum rixosorum coronæ. . . . In his vero casibus, sicut ab Ecclesiæ catholicæ sententia recedere nemini licet; ita convenit Ecclesiæ pastores sic moderari auctoritatem suam, ut nec imbecilles animos, propriis sensibus nimirum addictos, incaute provocent ad secessionem, nec in levibus causis pariant grande malum."—MABILLON, *Præfatio in III. Secul. Benedict.*, No. 14, 15.

daily felt the weight of the terrible excesses of the conquest. It was less violent and less prolonged in Caledonia, and came to a conclusion there as soon as the struggle ceased between the Celts and the Saxons. And it was almost non-existent in Ireland, where, except in the incursion of Egfrid, which was universally blamed by the Northumbrian saints, the Saxons never penetrated by the strong hand, and where the two races lived peaceably together. Nothing could give more satisfactory proof how little the fundamental truths of Christianity and the infallible authority of the Church had to do with the matter, and how much in it was national rather than religious.[1]

Celtic monachism is vanquished in the British Isles as in Gaul by the rule of St Benedict.

In all that concerns the special subject of these volumes, it will be remarked that the result of the struggle between the two great elements which disputed the empire of the monastic world was the same in the British Islands as in Gaul. This struggle was much longer and more serious in Great Britain, because it was complicated by national dislike, legitimate resistance, and an unappeasable resentment, which had no place in the influence exercised in France by Columbanus of Luxeuil and his Irish monks. The rule and order of St Benedict were naturally associated, in the eyes of the vanquished and dispossessed Celts, with the ferocious foreigners who pursued them even to the mountain-glens and islands,

[1] VARIN, 2e *Mémoire.*

in which they found a last asylum. Besides, the Columba of Iona, the great patriarch of the Celtic monks in Great Britain, was, it appears to us, a much more attractive personage than his illustrious namesake of Luxeuil; his sons, his heirs, Aïdan, Adamnan, and so many others, had a greater fascination, a much greater influence upon the masses and upon events than the successors of Columbanus among the Gallo-Franks. At the same time the sons of St Benedict, the victors of the struggle, from St Augustin to Bede, were much more remarkable men than the greater part of the Gallo-Frankish Benedictines of their day. St Eloysius and St Leger, whose history we shall soon relate, were scarcely equal to Wilfrid, Cuthbert, Benedict Biscop, and the venerable Bede. The latter, besides, are more entirely monks, more completely identified with the Benedictine institution. It is, however, evident on both sides of the Channel that the Celtic element fell, died away, and disappeared before the Roman element as personified in the order of St Benedict. The Benedictine influence everywhere carried the day, and prepared for the Church those valiant legions which, after having edified and disciplined France, and conquered and civilised England, marched on to new victories, and extended beyond the Rhine and the Elbe the frontiers of Christendom.

# CHAPTER IV.

## THE VENERABLE BEDE.

The entire history of this period is summed up in the venerable Bede.—His works.—Encyclopædical character of his genius.—His theological and scientific writings; his love for the classics.—His *History of the English*.—His scrupulous care to prove its truth.—His soul.—The love of virtue and truth evident in all his writings.—He is himself the type of the noble lives he records.—His life passed entirely in the cloister of Yarrow.—He is spared in his youth by the pestilence which carries off the whole community except himself and his abbot.—His different masters; his diligence in work.—His extensive connections.—His friendship with Abbot Acca.—His works on Holy Scripture.—His celebrated letter to Bishop Egbert of York upon the abuses of ecclesiastical government and monastic life.—His bold freedom does not diminish his authority.—He is accused of heresy in popular drinking-songs.—His intimacy with the monks of Lindisfarne.—Narrative of his death by an eyewitness.—His worship and his relics.—Contrast between the country he lived in and the actual condition of Northumberland.

"O venerable Bede!
The saint, the scholar, from a circle freed
Of toil stupendous, in a hallowed seat
Of learning, where thou heardst the billows beat
On a wild coast, rough monitors to feed
Perpetual industry. Sublime Recluse!
The recreant soul, that dares to shun the debt
Imposed on human kind, must first forget
Thy diligence, thy unrelaxing use
Of a long life; and in the hour of death
The last dear service of thy passing breath."
—WORDSWORTH.

THE period of history which we have just recorded is crowned by one of those great figures which

stand out above the sea of ages, and triumph over the forgetfulness as well as over the systematic contempt of frivolous generations. The name of Bede, after having been one of the greatest and most popular in Christendom, still remains invested with an unchangeable fame. He is the type of that studious and learned life which, in the eyes of many, sums up the entire mission of the monk. He was the most cultivated man, the greatest intellectual personage of his country and age; but he holds a still greater position in the eyes of those to whom he has been a guide and master throughout a laborious and bewildering task. By the student who has passed several years almost entirely in his company, he is venerated as a saint and loved as a friend, and, without absolving him of his patriotic prejudices and partialities, the spirit does reverence to his character still more than to his glory.

Let us then examine his works, his spirit, and his life.

His works. We turn to his works in the first place, which have made him the wonder and honour of his age, as well as a father and doctor of the Church. This Anglo-Saxon, born at the end of the Christian world, and of a race which half a century before his birth was still plunged in the darkness of idolatry, at once reveals himself clothed in the fulness of all enlightenment known to his time. Thanks to the unwearying activity of his mind, and the universal extension of his researches, his fame be-

came European, and lasted through all the middle ages. It was not only the great historian whom, during his lifetime, and for long centuries after his death, men admired, as we ourselves admire him—it was, in addition to this, the master whose vast erudition embraced all that was then studied and known in the world. The universal character of his genius is that which most astonished his contemporaries, and has even excited surprise among our own.

The universal character of his genius.

He was for England what Cassiodorus was for Italy and St Isidore for Spain. But he had, in addition, an influence and echo beyond his own country which has been surpassed by none: his influence upon Christendom was as rapid as it was extensive, and his works, which soon found a place in all the monastic libraries of the West, brought down his fame to the period of the Renaissance. He wrote at his pleasure in prose or verse, in Anglo-Saxon and in Latin; and many of his writings prove that he was acquainted with Greek.[1] The greater part of his works were devoted to theology and its cognate studies. In the list which he himself made out, three years before his death, of the forty-five works which he had written up to that time, he enume-

His theological writings,

[1] The translation which he had made of the Gospel of St John from Greek into Latin is unhappily lost.—GILES, *Life of Bede*, p. 51. M. Ozanam, in his *Etudes Germaniques*, quotes a paper from M. Renan, crowned by the Academy, but not published, which proves that the study of Greek was maintained among the Anglo-Saxon monks long after its introduction by the Archbishop St Theodore.

rates, in the first place, his commentaries and homilies upon Holy Scripture, specially drawn from the Fathers, so as to form a summary, for the use of his countrymen and of all Christians, of the traditional doctrines of the Church. These Biblical studies occupied him much during his whole life, and he professed a marked preference for that source of human knowledge which, to his eyes, surpassed all others, as much in its antiquity as by its divine origin and moral usefulness.[1] He plunged into this study with an ardour so intelligent and persevering, that it won him, in the eyes of the most illustrious of his countrymen, St Boniface, the reputation of being one of the most sagacious investigators of the Holy Scriptures.[2] In his Martyrology, his historical summaries, and his biographies of the saints, he added a demonstration of the government of God by facts and the lives of men, to the theoretic exposition of the teachings of the faith.

And scientific.

But, far from confining himself to theology, he wrote with success upon astronomy and meteorology, physics and music, philosophy and geography, arithmetic and rhetoric, grammar and versification, without omitting medicine, and without disdaining to descend even to orthography and numeration.

[1] "Sancta Scriptura cæteris omnibus scripturis, non solum auctoritate, quia divina; vel utilitate, quia ad vitam ducit æternam; sed et antiquitate et ipsa præeminet.—*De Schematibus Scripturæ*, ap. *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, t. iii. p. 506.

[2] "Sagacissimi investigatoris Scripturarum monachi Bedæ."—S. Bonifacii *Epist. ad Huetbertum Abbatem.*

His treatises have almost always the form of abridgments or catechisms adapted to the education of his monastic disciples. He thus penetrated, with a bold and unwearying step, into all the paths then open to the human intelligence, with a clearness and extent of vision truly surprising for the age and circumstances under which he lived. He thus won the name of Father of English learning, given to him by the greatest of modern Englishmen.[1] His scientific essays, *De Rerum Natura*, and *De Temporum Ratione*, contain a first essay towards a universal chronology, and afterwards sum up with method and precision the physical and astronomical sciences, which had, among our ancestors, survived the decay of the Roman empire. Good judges have even acknowledged that he had gathered more actual truths and fewer errors than are to be found in any Roman books upon similar subjects.[2] In this region, as elsewhere, our worthy Anglo-Saxon appeals with respectful confidence to the authority of Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Pliny. Like all the scholars and writers of Christian ages, he shows a certain satisfaction in exhibiting his familiarity with classic authors. He has left to us, or at least there have been attributed to him, collections of

His love for the classics.

[1] "Father of English learning"—this is the name given him by Burke, *Essay on English History*, p. 229.

[2] SHARON TURNER, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. p. 403. According to this author, Bede's work is sufficient of itself to prove that the irruption of the Teutonic nations into the Roman empire was in no way the substitution of barbarism for knowledge.

sentences drawn from Plato, Seneca, and, above all, Cicero, of whom he was an enthusiastic admirer. He often quotes Ovid and Lucan, Statius, Lucretius, and still oftener Virgil, whom he quotes even in the tales of the miracles of his Northumbrian saints.[1] He has also attempted to imitate him in a pretty ecologue on the return of spring.[2] He thus presents, in the eighth century, the type of that character of *scholar*—that is to say, of a man profoundly imbued with classic literature—which the English of the present day still prize so highly, and which the princes of public eloquence,[3] not less than the chiefs of the episcopate, esteem one of their highest distinctions. It does not seem, however, that his familiarity with these illustrious heathens weakened him either in Christian feeling or in the monastic spirit; and nothing in his life contradicts the touching prayer with which he ends the list of his literary labours: "Oh, good Jesus, who hast deigned to refresh my soul with the sweet streams of knowledge, grant to me that I may one day mount to Thee, who art the source

[1] Thus, in relating the case of a demoniac at the tomb of the saint and king Oswald at Bardeney, he uses the well-known line—

"Conticuere omnes, intentique ora tenebant."

The illustrious Newman has fully established the absurdity of the supposition made by Milman, the learned Anglican Dean of St Paul's, that Bede and other monastic doctors knew classical antiquity only at second-hand by extracts or isolated fragments. This idea is contradicted by all the monuments of the time, as well as by the very nature of the monastic spirit and studies.—*Atlantis*, 1859, n. 3, p. 31.

[2] "*Cuculus*, sive Veris et Hiemis conflictus," vol. i. p. 35, ed. Giles. Compare p. clxix.

[3] Mr Gladstone, commentator, and Lord Derby, translator, of Homer.

of all wisdom, and remain for ever in Thy divine presence."[1]

This constant thought of God, of the soul, and of eternal salvation which is evident in all the works of his laborious life, and manly intelligence, shows itself at the beginning of the great work which still wins for him the attention and gratitude of all friends of the truth. "I entreat," he says in his Preface, "all those of our nation who read this History, or hear it read, to recommend often to the divine clemency the infirmities of my body and of my soul. Let each man in his province, seeing the care which I have taken to note down everything that is memorable or agreeable for the inhabitants of each district, pay me back by praying for me." "Dear and good father," he also writes when sending the first copy of his History to the friend who had suggested it to him, "beloved friend in Christ, remember, I beseech you, my weakness, you and all the servants of Christ who live with you; remember to intercede for me with the merciful Judge, and make all those who read my humble work do the same."[2]

History of the English.

[1] "Teque deprecor, bone Jesu, ut cui propitius donasti verba tuæ scientiæ dulciter haurire, dones etiam benignus, aliquando ad te fontem omnis sapientiæ pervenire et apparere semper ante faciem tuam."

[2] "Omnes . . . nostræ nationis legentes sive audientes, suppliciter precor ut pro meis infirmitatibus et mentis et corporis . . . sæpius intervenire meminerint: et in suis quique provinciis hanc mihi remunerationis vicem rependant, ut qui de singulis provinciis . . . quæ memoratu digna atque incolis grata credideram diligenter adnotare curavi."—*Hist. Eccles., Præfatio gloriosissimo Regi Ceoluulfo.* "Semper amantissime in Christo pater optime, . . . te supplex obsecro ut pro mea fragilitate

This humble work—this *pamphlet*, as it is called by the great and modest writer—was nothing less than that *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, which has made Bede not only the father of English history, but the true founder of history in the middle ages. The most competent authorities have recognised in him a chronicler well-informed and systematic, an able and penetrating critic, on whom the rigorous precision of his language, and the scrupulous accuracy of his narrative, bestow the full right of being heard and having his testimony weighed, even upon facts which could not come under his personal observation.[1] Besides, all his narrative which is not founded upon what he himself saw or heard, is given on the authority of contemporaries always conscientiously quoted and carefully designated or described by him. "I have consulted individually," he says, "in all that refers to Northumbria, innumerable writers in addition to all that I could answer for myself. . . . But I pray my reader humbly, if he finds that I have written anything which is not the truth, not to blame me severely for it, since, according to the true law of history, I have sincerely laboured to put into writing for the instruction of posterity all that I could gather from common report."[2]

cum his qui tecum sunt, apud pium judicem sedulus intercedere memineris: sed et eos quos eadem nostra opuscula pervenire feceris, hoc idem facere monueris."—*Epist. ad Albinum Abbat.*, Op. Minora, p. 229.

[1] LAPPENBERG, OZANAM, VARIN.

[2] "Si qua in his quæ scripsimus aliter quam se veritas habet posita repererit, non hoc nobis imputet qui, quod vera lex historiæ est, sim-

The rare prudence with which he records those miracles which occupy so exaggerated a place in the annals, or, more strictly, in the habits and necessities of his time, is especially remarkable. He gives none upon his own personal authority, but always names the persons from whom they come, stating whether he has received them at first or second hand.[1]

Thus the most sceptical reader is unable to turn over the pages of Bede without being convinced at once of his sincerity and of his historical discrimination; while the Christian, eager to know and admire the works of God still more in the history of spiritual life than in the history of nations, can never feel sufficient gratitude to the unwearied worker who has endowed us with a book unrivalled among the historical works of Christianity, and who has given to England and its specially historic race the finest monument of national history which any modern people has yet received from its fathers.[2]

pliciter ea quæ fama vulgante collegimus ad instructionem posteritatis litteris mandare studuimus."—*Præfatio.*

[1] Not a single miracle is to be found in the biography of the five first abbots of his own monastery, all of whom he had personally known; while they abound in his narrative of the life of St Cuthbert, which he had from the monks of Lindisfarne. This is remarked by the wise and pious Lingard.—*Anglo-Saxon Church*, ii. 102, 103.

[2] All who have had to make researches into medieval historians, and to whom it is of consequence to save their time and eyesight, know the inestimable value of a good, portable, and easily-read edition. Such persons will thank us for pointing out to them, among the numerous editions of the venerable Bede, that published at Oxford in 1846, by Robert Hussey, bachelor in theology and professor of history. It con-

His spiritual life.

This historian of souls begins by making us acquainted with his own; for who does not recognise, by the fashion in which a man tells the tale of the trials of virtue and truth here below, what he himself would have been capable of doing or suffering for them? The soul which thus betrays itself in his narrative is holy and full of grace. Not only in his beautiful narrations of ceaseless self-devotion, and of all the wonders of which man regenerated by faith is capable, but in the person of Bede himself, we find a complete type of that humility, serenity, and generous fervour which have won him throughout all Christendom the surname of Venerable. The Christian virtues were united naturally in him to that thirst for knowledge, that love of study, that vivifying thirst for work, that noble thoughtfulness of things divine and human, which make our monk-historian so interesting a personage in the history of the human mind. An esteemed writer[1]

tains in one volume all the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, with the lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Yarrow, and Bede's letter to Archbishop Egbert. It also contains all the divers readings and notes of the great edition of Smith (1722), rectified and completed with exemplary clearness and sobriety by the editor. If he had added to his volume Bede's life of St Cuthbert, the letter of the other Cuthbert upon the death of the historian, and a map, this excellent publication would have left nothing to be desired. Justice obliges us to name here by the side of Bede a writer of our own day, M. W. B. Maccabe, who, in his *Catholic History of England* (London, 1847-49, 2 vols.), has devoted himself to a faithful reproduction of the narratives of Bede and other ancient historians, and, by giving a faithful and minute picture of the three first centuries of English history, deserves the gratitude of those who love to know the truth without being able to seek it at the fountainhead.

[1] Lappenberg.

reproaches him with having been more Roman than English. I consider this reproach quite unfounded; no trace is to be found of the least sacrifice of his patriotism to his orthodoxy. He certainly preferred the Roman to the Celtic spirit; but it was his Anglo-Saxon patriotism, and not his Roman predilections, which dictated to him certain judgments inspired by national prejudice against the vanquished Britons in spiritual as well as temporal affairs. He had, like all other men, his preferences, his weaknesses, his blindness—but never has he willingly disguised, mutilated, or betrayed the truth; on the contrary, he served and loved with his best powers not only truth but justice, and, as it has been well said by an upright historian[1] of our own day, impartiality consists in being just, not in being neuter.

His life may be regarded as a faithful mirror of the laborious and holy existence of those vast cloisters which continued to rise in England under the rule of St Benedict, and which were not less numerous in the eighth than in the seventh century. It was entirely past in the monastery which had sheltered his childhood. He was born in 673,[2] in one of the seventy detached manors of public property (Folc-lands), which King Egfrid bestowed on Abbot Benedict Biscop on his fourth return

His life.

[1] FRANZ DE CHAMPAGNY, *Correspondant*, vol. xii. p. 785.

[2] According to Mabillon and Lingard; not in 674, as say Pagi and Stephenson.

from Rome. The little Bede, whose name in Anglo-Saxon means *prayer*, was intrusted by his
680. relatives at the age of seven to Benedict, who had just completed his monastery of Wearmouth. But the holy and learned abbot soon transferred the charge and education of his young pupil to his co-
682. adjutor Ceolfrid, when, with his twenty monks, old and young, the latter removed a short distance off, to found, at the mouth of the Tyne, the colony of Yarrow. They were no sooner installed in
686. their new home than a cruel epidemic seized the colony. It carried off all the monks who could sing in the choir, except the abbot alone and the young Bede, still a child, who was his favourite pupil. These two continued to celebrate, as they best could, among their tears and regrets, the entire canonical service, with obstinate precision, until new brethren joined them.[1] There are few who will not be touched by the thought of these two representatives of Northumbrian Christianity and Anglo-Saxon monachism, the one already mature and illustrious, the other an obscure child predestined to fame, singing all alone the praises of God in their cloister depopulated by death, and

[1] "Abbas . . . multum tristis, præcepit ut, intermisso ritu priori, psalmodiam totam, præter Vesperam et Matutinas, sine antiphonis transigerent: quod cum unius hebdomadis spatio inter multas ejus lacrymas et querimonias esse actitatum, diutius hoc fieri non ferens rursus statuit: ut antiphonatæ psalmodiæ juxta morem instauraretur, cunctisque adnitentibus, per se et quem prædixi puerum, quæ statuerat, non parvo cum labore complebat."—BEDE, t. vi., App., p. 421. See note 1 in page 453 of the preceding vol.

awaiting the future with resigned yet unconquerable faith!

At the death of Benedict Biscop, when Ceolfrid was called to the head of the reunited monasteries, which now formed but one community,[1] the young Bede remained at Yarrow, which he never left. There he received deacon's orders at nineteen, and at the age of thirty the priesthood from the hands of St John, called of Beverley, who then occupied the see of Wilfrid at Hexham. And there he passed all the rest of his life, which was dedicated to study and meditation on Holy Scripture, without other amusement than the daily songs of the choir —without other pleasure, as he has himself said, than to learn, to teach, and to write.[2]

At the same time, when Bede tells us that he passed all his life in the same monastery, it must not be supposed that he denied himself the expeditions which occupied so considerable a part in the lives of the principal monks. Notwithstanding the great authority which attached to Benedict Biscop's double foundation, and the number of monks who hastened to it, it is difficult to imagine how the young monk could follow, without leaving his monastery, the lessons of all those whom at

[1] See vol. iv. p. 450 and 456.

[2] "Cum essem annorum septem, cura propinquorum datus sum educandus . . . cunctumque ex eo tempus vitæ in ejusdem monasterii habitatione peragens, omnem meditandis Scripturis operam dedi; atque inter observantiam disciplinæ regularis et quotidianam cantandi in ecclesia curam, semper aut discere, aut docere, aut scribere dulce habui." —BEDE, *Hist. Eccles.*, v. 24.

various periods he calls his masters. For whether at Yarrow or elsewhere, he received an education both valuable and varied. Among those who introduced him into the study of the Bible, he indicates a monk trained by Ceadda, the humble and earnest rival of Wilfrid, and, in consequence, imbued with all that was purest and most irreproachable in Celtic tradition;[1] while Greek was taught by monks of the school founded by Theodore in his metropolis of Canterbury,[2] and ecclesiastical music by the precentor of St Peter's in the Vatican, whom Pope Vitalianus sent to England with Benedict Biscop.[3]

His different masters.

His industry.

From pupil he soon became master, and that of the highest rank. It is evident from various passages of his works that his days and nights, of which a very moderate part was given to sleep, were divided between the studies and researches which he pursued to his last hour, the instructions which he gave to the six hundred monks of his double community, without reckoning the foreign monks whom he admitted to his lessons, and the composition of the books which have immortalised him. An existence more completely occupied it would be difficult to imagine. Except during the course of his last illness, he had no assistant in

[1] "Frater quidam de eis qui me in Scripturis erudiebant et erat in monasterio ac magisterio illius (Ceaddæ) educatus, vocabulo Trumberct." —*Hist. Eccles.*, iv. 3.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 213.

[3] See vol. iv. p. 446.

his work. "I am my own secretary," he said; "I dictate, I compose, I copy all myself." Though he was not unconscious of the obstacles which the yoke—or, as he himself says, the servitude of the rule—threw in the way of his work, he never withdrew himself from it;[1] and long after his death his scrupulous exactness in fulfilling all its obligations, especially that of singing the common service, was told in his praise.[2]

His extended connection.

The laborious severity of this life in the cloister did not, however, put any obstacle in the way of his extensive and important intercourse with the world outside. His friendships were almost all produced or occasioned by the composition of his great historical work. He was urged to undertake it by Albinus, whom we have already remarked as the principal disciple of the Archbishop Theodore and the African abbot Adrian, the first Anglo-Saxon ever called to govern the great monastery of St Augustin at Canterbury. Albinus furnished him with memoranda of all that had happened in Kent and the neighbouring counties in the time of the missionaries sent by St Gregory;[3] he even sent a priest of the adjoining diocese of London to Rome, to search in the archives of the Roman Church, with the permission of the reigning pope,

[1] "Injuncti me operis labori supposui: in quo ut innumera monasticæ servitutis retinacula præteream ipse mihi dictator, simul notarius et librarius existerem."—*Epistola ad Accam*, Opera, i. 179.

[2] ALCUINI *Opera*, i. p. 282.

[3] Bede describes him as "vir per omnia doctissimus."

Gregory II., for the letters of his predecessors and other documents relative to the mission to England.[1] All the bishops of England also assisted in the work by transmitting to the author what information they could collect concerning the origin of the faith in their dioceses, and the principal acts of the holy personages who had lived in them. The abbots and monks of the most important monasteries also furnished their contingent. The details given on this subject by Bede himself show that a constant communication was kept up between the principal centres of religious life, and that an amount of intellectual activity as surprising as admirable, when the difficulty of communication and the internal wars which ravaged England are taken into consideration, existed among their inhabitants.

In addition to his great historical work, his correspondence gives evidence of the number of visits he must have paid and received on the subjects of his studies and writings. There is no proof that he was ever at Rome, to which in his day so many Anglo-Saxon monks and princes crowded, though this was long believed.[2] But it is known that he was on terms of friendship with the King of the Northumbrians, to whom he dedicated his History

[1] "Perscrutato sanctæ Ecclesiæ Romanæ scrinio."—*Prolog.*

[2] From a letter written by Pope Sergius, given by William of Malmesbury, but which does not refer to our Bede, according to Mabillon.—*Act. SS. O. S. B.*, t. iii. p. 509; and LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 410, 415.

of England, and with the King of Kent, to whom he addressed a letter upon the celebration of Easter. Among the bishops of his time his most intimate friend was Acca, the companion and successor of Wilfrid at Hexham. This learned and magnificent prelate took the warmest interest in literature and the arts. After having ornamented with many great works the abbey church built by his master at Hexham, he added a very large and noble library, according to Bede, of which the latter made great use. They were in intimate and constant communication. Bede dedicated several of his works in prose and verse to the successor of Wilfrid; and Acca, who loved, like Bede, to quote from the classics, and who, like Gregory the Great, had a fancy for playing upon words, insisted that his laborious friend, who had given him a commentary upon the Gospel by St Mark, should add to it a commentary on Luke.[1] The correspondence between these two Anglo-Saxon monks, while doing no discredit to their ability, is specially honourable to their hearts, and shows to what a height prayer and study had developed in the Northumbrian cloisters the affectionate sentiments and tender feelings of friendship. In this correspondence Bede lavishes assurances of his regard on him, whom he calls the most loved and longed-for of all bishops.[2] He shows

[1] "Beatum Lucam luculento sermone expone."—T. i. p. cliii., ed. Giles. See other editions, *ap.* RAINE, *The Priory of Hexham*, p. 32, 33, 34.

[2] "*Dilectissime* ac desideratissime omnium qui in terris morantur

himself to be, as he says, ruled and inspired by that trust and mutual tenderness which believes and hopes everything from the heart it loves.[1] At the same time those pure and noble motives which guided him in his studies and commentaries on Holy Scripture, which held the greatest place in his life, and have so much contributed to the increase of his influence on Christendom, are fully apparent in his letters. Both here and elsewhere the reader perceives by what a pious and patriotic anxiety he was moved to combat the ignorance and lukewarmness of the new Catholics of England, by making them capable of reading and understanding the Bible.[2] To bring to the level of all capacities the most approved explanations of obscure passages; to seek out with scrupulous care the mystic sense and spiritual use of Biblical narratives; at once to go deeply into and to simplify that study of the sacred words which is so dear and so necessary to real piety; to draw from it the lessons and especially the consolations pointed out by the apostle St Paul,[3] and of which we have so much need in the sharp anguish of this sombre life,

*antistitum.*" And elsewhere: "Bene vale semper, amantissime antistes, nostri memor in Domino. . . . Domino beatissimo et omnium desideratissimo Accæ episcopo Beda humilis presbyter."

[1] "Non hæc certa alia quam indubitata mutui fiducia facit amoris, quæ de amico pectore omnia duntaxat quæ fieri possunt, credit, omnia sperat."—P. 179, ed. Giles.

[2] "Nostræ, id est Anglorum gentis, inertiæ consulendum ratus."—*Epist. ad Eusebium*, p. 193, ed. Giles.

[3] See especially *Epistola ad Accam de Templo Salomonis*, p. 171, ed. Giles.

and during the prolonged delays of divine justice; to give thus an answer to the anxiety which filled the minds of the great monks who were the apostles of England, and of other ancient nations: such was the task of our Bede. He gave himself up to it with a fervour which never relaxed; with a perseverance which consumed his nights and days; with touching and sincere modesty; with delicate precautions against the danger of being taken for a plagiarist;[1] with a courage which sometimes failed him under the greatness of the task, and the multitude of obstacles in his way, but only to spring up again more unconquerable than ever; and, in short, with a solidity and assurance of doctrine which have kept for him, till the present time, a place among the best authorised interpreters of the Catholic faith.[2]

His celebrated letter to Bishop Egbert of York.

Another bishop with whom Bede had much intercourse was Egbert, Bishop of York, a brother of the King of Northumbria, and a disciple of Bede himself. Sometimes the prince-bishop would visit his former master at Yarrow; sometimes Bede, in return, went to the episcopal monastery of York,

[1] "Sollicitus per omnia ne majorum dicta furari, et hæc quasi mea propria componere. . . . Qui in legis divinæ meditatione etsi non (ut ipse scripsisti) dies noctesque pervigiles ducere sufficio . . . operis immensitate perterritus et obstrepentium causarum (quas tu melius nosti) necessitate præpeditus. . . . Opusculum velocissime quantum tempus dederat, ne tua sacrosancta voluntas impediretur, emendatum membranulis indideram."—*Epist. ad Accam*, p. 180, 184.

[2] An idea of his spirit and style may be attained by reading in the Roman Breviary the service for All Saints' Day and the two days following, in which several of the lessons are taken from his *De Sanctis*.

where he occupied himself in superintending the school established by Egbert, or sought out recollections of Paulinus and of Wilfrid, and all the details of that religious history of Northumbria which without him would have fallen into forgetfulness for ever. The two friends studied together during these visits. A year before his death, not being able to accept an invitation from Egbert, Bede addressed to him a letter, which has been preserved, and which is a sort of treatise upon the spiritual and temporal government of Northumbria.[1] It displays, in the first place, the manly independence of Bede's judgment and language, and the great authority which this simple monk possessed even in the eyes of the princes and pontiffs of his country. It throws, at the same time, a fresh and full light upon the abuses which had glided into the Anglo-Saxon Church, and specially into the administration of monastic possessions.

He begins by recommending the bishop to study and meditate the Holy Scriptures, especially the epistles of St Paul to Titus and Timothy, and the Pastoral of St Gregory; and exhorts him to avoid idle and gossiping conversation and bad company —"for," he adds, "there are bishops who, instead of surrounding themselves with religious and

[1] "Memini te hesterno dixisse anno, cum tecum aliquot diebus legendi gratia in monasterio tuo demorarer, quod hoc etiam anno velles, cum in eundem devenires locum, me quoque, ob commune legendi studium, ad tuum accire colloquium." This letter was written in 734 or 735. Egbert took possession of the see of Wilfrid in 732.

chaste persons, are accompanied only by buffoons or drunkards, who take more thought how to fill their bellies than how to feed and sanctify their souls."[1]

He then continues as follows: "Your diocese is too extensive to permit you to visit all the hamlets and out-of-the-way corners in it every year. You must then establish, as coadjutors in each village, priests who will preach the Word of God, celebrate the divine mysteries, and baptise. And, above all, let the priests teach all your diocesans to know the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer by heart. Those who do not understand Latin ought to be able to sing or say the *Pater* and the *Credo* in their own language; and I say this not only for the laity, but also for the clerks and monks who do not understand Latin. It is especially for the use of those uninstructed priests that I have translated the Creed and the *Pater* into English. When you thus stir up the people of God by frequent and common prayer to understand, love, hope for, and seek heavenly gifts, your paternal solicitude will receive from the Pastor of pastors a reward so much the more noble that it is seldom merited by bishops of our nation."[2] Bede entreats his friend,

Against the abuses of ecclesiastical government,

[1] "Quod non ita loquor, quasi te aliter facere sciam, sed quia de quibusdam episcopis fama vulgatum est, quod . . . nullos secum alicujus religionis aut continentiæ viros habeant, sed potius illos qui risui, jocis, fabulis, comessationibus et ebrietatibus . . . subigantur, et magis quotidie ventrem dapibus quam mentem sacrificiis cœlestibus pascant."

[2] "Et quia latiora sunt spatia . . . quam ut solus per omnia discurrere et in singulis viculis atque agellis verbum Dei prædicare . . . sufficias

in continuation, to neglect no means of giving to the lay population pastors capable of teaching them the doctrines of salvation, the hatred of sins which are odious to the Lord, and the practice of good works; he insists upon frequent and even daily communion, according to the usage of the Church in Italy, Gaul, Africa, Greece, and throughout all the East. "Among us," says Bede, "thanks to the carelessness of the pastors, the most religious laymen dare not communicate except at Christmas, the Epiphany, and Easter, although there are numberless Christians, young and old, of pure life, who might without scruple approach these holy mysteries on the Sundays and feasts of the apostles and martyrs, as you have yourself seen in the holy apostolic Church of Rome."[1]

Having said this, he does not hesitate to point out to the prelate an abuse which was destined to rise throughout all the Church to a lamentable height. "Beware, dear bishop, of the crime of those who think only of drawing earthly lucre from

. . . necessarium est ut plures tibi sacri ordinis adjutores adsciscas. . . . Idiotas, id est, eos qui propriæ tantum linguæ notitiam habent, hæc ipsa sua lingua discere ac sedulo decantare facito. . . . Propter quod et ipse multis sæpe sacerdotibus idiotis hæc utraque . . . in linguam Anglorum translatam obtuli. Quanto enim rariora hujus sacratissimi operis in episcopis nostræ gentis exempla reperis, tanto altiora . . . præmia recipies."

[1] "Eorum quoque qui in populari adhuc vita continentur sollicitam te necesse est curam gerere, et sufficientes eis doctores vitæ salutaris adhibere memineris. . . . Cum sint innumeri innocentes et castissimæ conversationis pueri ac puellæ, juvenes et virgines, senes et anus. . . . Ipsi etiam conjugati, si quis sibi mensuram continentiæ ostendat et virtutem castitatis insinuet, idem et licenter possint et libenter facere velint."

their ministry. It is said that there are many villages in our Northumberland, situated among inaccessible hills or woods, where the arrival of a bishop to baptise, and teach the faith, and the distinction between good and evil, has never been witnessed, yet where no one is exempt from payment of the bishop's dues. Thus there are bishops who, far from evangelising their flock without reward, as our Lord wills, receive, without preaching, the money which He has forbidden them, even while preaching, to accept."[1]

Bede's idea was, that with the help of the good and pious King Ceolwulf, it would be very easy for the Bishop of York, his relative and friend, to find a cure for these troubles by returning to the plan of St Gregory the Great—re-establishing the metropolis of York, and dividing that diocese, which was still, notwithstanding the divisions which had been forced upon Wilfrid, much too large, among twelve suffragans. With his logical and practical spirit, our historian at once points out the means of arriving at this result without any fear of wounding the interests or exposing the

[1] "Attende quid gravissimi sceleris . . . antistes dilectissime. . . . Audivimus et fama est, quia multæ villæ ac viculi nostræ gentis in montibus sint inaccessis ac saltibus dumosis positi, ubi numquam multis transeuntibus annis sit visus antistes . . . quorum tamen nec unus quidem a tributis antistiti reddendis esse possit immunis . . . sicque fit ut episcoporum quidam non solum gratis non evangelizent." Lingard (*Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. i. p. 183) believes that we have in this passage the first mention of tithes, of which there is no further notice elsewhere in Bede, and which do not appear to have been regularly established in England before the close of the eighth century.

infirmities of his order. "I know very well," he says, "that by the carelessness of the old kings, and their foolish liberality, it is difficult to find unappropriated lands to endow the new bishoprics. For this reason it appears to me that, after having deliberated on it in the great council, with the advice of the pontiff and the king, some existing monastery should be taken to be erected into a bishopric. And in order that the abbot and monks may not be tempted to opposition, they must be permitted to elect the future bishop among themselves, to be at once the head of the monastery and of the new diocese, or to choose one according to the canons outside their community, if no one suitable can be found within.[1] It would be so much the more easy to increase, if there is room for it, the endowment of new dioceses, that there exist, as we all know, numberless places which bear the name of monasteries without keeping up a shadow of monastic observance. To appropriate their possessions, according to the authority of public

Against disorderly monasteries,

[1] "Et quidem novimus quia per incuriam regum præcedentium, donationesque stultissimas factum est, ut non facile locus vacans ubi sedes episcopalis nova fieri debeat, inveniri valeat. . . . Quapropter commodum duxerim, habito majori concilio et consensu pontificali simul et regali edicto, prospiciatur locus aliquis monasteriorum ubi sedet episcopalis fiat. Et ne forte abbas et monachi resistere tentaverint, detur illis licentia, ut de suis ipsi eligant eum qui episcopus ordinetur et adjacentium locorum quotquos ad eamdem diœcesim pertineant, una cum ipso monasterio curam gerat episcopalem: aut si forte in ipso monasterio qui episcopus ordinari debeat inveniri nequeat, in ipsorum tamen juxta statuta canorum pendeat examine qui de sua diœcesi ordinetur antistes."

assemblies, for the endowment of new bishoprics, would be to substitute purity for incontinence, temperance for gluttony, and piety for vanity. Yes, there are vast and numerous establishments which are of use for nothing, neither for the service of God nor man. No monastic rule is observed among them; no advantage is drawn from them by the earls and knights who have the burden of defending our nation from the barbarians. He, then, who should make them into new bishoprics would be neither a usurper nor a prevaricator: he would do a work of salvation and an act of virtue."[1]

The abuse of territorial gifts.

He then proceeds to forestall the objection which might be drawn from the sanction given by kings and national assemblies to the gifts which had endowed these pseudo-monasteries. "Would it, then, be a sin to correct the unjust decisions of old chiefs by the revision of more enlightened men, and to abrogate the lying formulas of certain scribes by the authority of priests and sages, in imitation of these good kings of Judah of whom Scripture speaks, who repaired the evil done by their impious predecessors? Let their example encourage you, in concert with our religious king, to destroy the unjust and irreligious decrees made by the former

[1] "Sunt loca innumera . . . in monasteriorum ascripta vocabulum, sed nihil prorsus monasticæ conversationis habentia; e quibus velim aliqua de luxuria ad castitatem . . . synodica auctoritate transferantur. . . . Maximâ et plurima sunt quæ . . . neque Deo neque hominibus utilia sunt, quia neque regularis secundum Deum ibi vita servatur, neque illa milites siva comites secularium potestatum qui gentem nostram a barbaris defendant possident."

chiefs of our nation. You will thus provide at once for the spiritual and temporal necessities of our country. Otherwise we shall see at the same time the love and fear of Him who reads the heart disappear from among us, and the number of warriors diminish who are charged with the defence of our frontiers against the incursions of the barbarians; for you know better than I do, there are so many lands occupied by false monks that nothing remains to be given to the sons of nobles and old warriors; by which they are reduced either to cross the sea — deserting the country which they ought to have defended with their swords—or to consume their manhood in debauchery and idleness, for want of a suitable establishment on which to found a family."[1]

To these considerations of political and general interest, which throw so much light upon the military and territorial constitution of the Anglo-Saxon countries, Bede adds others which reveal not less pernicious abuses in the spiritual order.

"A still more serious crime," he says, "is committed when laymen, without either experience of

[1] "Injusta principum judicia recto meliorum principum examine corrigantur, ac mendax stilus scribarum iniquorum discreta prudentium et sacerdotum sententia deleatur. . . . Ea quæ provinciæ nostræ sive secundum Deum sive secundum seculum sint utilia, prospicere: ne . . . rarescente copia militiæ secularis, absint qui fines nostros a barbarica incursione tueantur. . . . Omnino deest locus ubi filii nobilium vel emeritorum militum possessionem accipere possunt . . . ideoque vacantes ac sine conjugio, exacto tempore pubertatis, vel patriam pro qua militare debuerunt, trans mare abeuntes, relinquunt; vel . . . luxuriæ ac fornicationi deserviant."

or love for monastic life, give money to the kings as the price of certain lands, under pretence of building monasteries there—and then claim to themselves a hereditary right over these lands by royal edicts which are afterwards confirmed by the signatures of bishops, abbots, and the great people of this world. In the estates and villages thus usurped they live according to their own pleasure, exempt from all subjection either to God or man; sometimes, though laymen, ruling over monks, or rather gathering together under the guise of monks men who have been driven out of true monasteries for disobedience, or whom they can seduce out of such, or whom they have found wandering about the country; or even taking some of their vassals, whose heads they shave, and whom they bind to a kind of monastic obedience. What a monstrous spectacle is that of these pretended cells, filled with men having wives and children, who come from the conjugal bed to manage the internal affairs of a monastery! There are even some who have the effrontery to procure similar convents for their wives, where these secular women dare to undertake the government of the servants of Christ.[1] Is there not room to say

[1] "Usurpatis sibi agellulis sive vicis, liberi exinde a divino simul et humano servitio . . . laici monachis imperantes . . . quoscumque ob culpam inobedientiæ veris expulsos monasteriis alicubi forte oberrantes invenerint . . . vel quos ipsi de suis satellitibus ad suscipiendam tonsuram promissa sibi obedientia monachica invitare quieverint. . . . Modo conjugis ac liberorum procurandarum curam gerunt; modo exurgentes de cubilibus quid intra septa monasteriorum geri debeat . . .

in this case, as says our proverb, that when the wasps make honeycombs it is to put poison inside instead of honey?"

He then proceeds to expose the disastrous consequences of these abuses, which, however, had begun only about thirty years before. Since the death of Aldfrid and the end of Wilfrid's pontificate, he continues, there was scarcely a great noble or *ealdorman* who had not taken advantage of his position to acquire such a monastery for himself, or even for his wife, and by degrees the officials and domestics of the kings had learned to do the same. They all professed to be abbots, while at the same time governors of provinces, or officers of the royal household, submitting to a kind of tonsure, in order, by their own authority, to raise themselves, though simple laymen, not only into monks but into abbots.[1] "All these scandals," says the venerable historian, "might have been avoided or repressed had not the bishops themselves been the principal offenders or accomplices, confirming by their signatures the concessions and grants of monasteries, and selling their base indulgence for money to the false abbots.[2] . . . I entreat you by the Lord, dearest

pertractant. . . . Quæ pari stultitia cum sint laicæ, famularum se Christi permittunt esse rectrices."

[1] "Nullus pene exinde præfectorum exstiteret qui non hujusmodi sibi monasterium in diebus suæ præfecturæ, suamque simul conjugem pari reatu nocivi mercatus astrinxerit. . . . Se abbates pariter et præfectos sive ministros aut famulos regis appellant . . . etsi a professione illa . . . sunt funditus extorres."

[2] "Si non ipsi pontifices magis hujusmodis sceleribus opem ferre atque

bishop, preserve your flock from the irruption of these dishonest wolves. Remember, that if you are a true and not a mercenary pastor, your duty is to examine carefully into all that is ill or well in every monastery of your diocese, in order that abbots and abbesses instructed in and subject to the holy rules may be found everywhere, worthy of presiding over a family of Christ's servants, and not an insolent and undisciplined crowd, disdainful of all spiritual rule. They must be taught resolutely that kings and great men, unless in cases of crimes against the princes themselves, have nothing to do with the monasteries, which remain under the sole authority of the bishops. It is your duty to prevent the devil from usurping those places consecrated to God, and substituting discord for peace, drunkenness for abstinence, debauchery and murder for chastity and charity. . . . I know well that my exhortations will meet many gainsayers, especially among those who are the authors or accomplices of the excesses I complain of. But you must treat with apostolic vigour those miserable successors of Ananias and Sapphira, who were cut off by sudden death from the society of the first monks, not even for usurping the possessions of others, but for having dishonestly

adstipulari probarentur: qui . . . hujusmodi decreta injusta . . . suis subscriptionibus confirmare satagunt, eadem ipsis phylargyria dictante, ad confirmandum male scripta, qua emptores comparandum hujusmodi monasteria coacti."

retained what was their own.[1] When he describes avarice and cupidity as idolatry, the Apostle Paul manifestly justifies those who refuse their signature, even when exacted by the king, to these shameful bargains, and even those who strike through and erase all such fatal documents.[2] Do not then allow yourself to be stopped by those who, to protect the work of their covetousness, present before you charters furnished with the signatures of great men and nobles.[3] Answer them in the words of our Lord, 'All that my Father in heaven has not planted shall be rooted out.' In short, do not permit those who never attempt to struggle, even in the smallest particular, against bodily or spiritual carnality, to lull themselves to sleep by a vain confidence in their salvation; dissipate the senseless illusion of those who believe that others will redeem them after their death by the celebration of holy mysteries of which their lives have made them unworthy, or that they will be absolved from their sins for the sake of some alms thrown to the poor in the midst of their daily indulgences and passions. The hand which gives to God must be, like the conscience, pure from all crime and soil.[4] This is my

[1] "Ananiam et Saphiram monachorum collegio indignos etiam corporis morte mulctavit . . . et quidem illi non aliena colligere, sed sua incongrue retinere maluerunt."

[2] "Qui vel subscriptione avari mercatus, rege licet imperante, manum substraxerunt."

[3] "Qui si chartas protulerunt in defensionem concupiscentiarum suarum ascriptas, ac nobilium personarum subscriptione confirmatas.

[4] "Quum manus ipse et conscientia quæ munus offerat Deo, munda a peccatis debeat esse et absoluta."

judgment against the venom of avarice. I should never come to an end had I to speak at equal length of other vices, from which God give you grace, my dearest bishop, to deliver your flock."

The whole of this admirable letter is thus occupied with the indignant protest of a true monk against the false monks, who already began to infect the life of the cloister, and against the greedy and feeble bishops who sanctioned or tolerated these unworthy abuses. If the example of the venerable Bede had always and everywhere found imitators; if pure and courageous voices like his had risen in the bosom of the Church, especially in recent ages, to warn her against the incoming of corruption, hypocrisy, and secular covetousness, it may well be believed that the homicidal hand of Protestant or revolutionary vandalism would never have succeeded in sweeping away from the entire surface of the Christian world the glorious establishments founded by the munificence and piety of our fathers.

One thing must be gladly admitted, which is, that the bold freedom and noble independence of Bede did him no harm, and lessened in no way the great and just reputation which he enjoyed throughout England, a fame which soon spread into all Europe, and went on increasing after his death to such a point, that the council of Aix-la-Chapelle, held a hundred years afterwards, described him as an "admirable doctor."[1]

[1] "Quid venerabilis et modernis temporibus doctor admirabilis, Beda

He is accused of heresy in popular songs.

This pleasant and glorious life was not, however, without a cloud. He excited the criticism of violent and narrow spirits, like all other superior men. They even went so far as to treat him as a heretic, because he had in his Chronology combated the then general opinion that the world was to last only six thousand years, and because, in his division of the six ages of the world, he had appeared a little uncertain about the date ordinarily fixed as that of the Incarnation. This accusation of heresy made so much noise, that it was discussed even among the peasants, who scoffed at it in their drinking-songs; a fact which proves that if the great were then, as always, exposed to calumny, the popular masses of the day took a singular interest in their good fame. Bede, who took credit to himself for having always kept with scrupulous care within the limits of the strictest orthodoxy, was at once troubled and rendered indignant by this imputation. He grew pale with surprise and horror, as he says to one of his friends, a monk, in an apologetic letter—a letter full of pride and energy, which he charges his correspondent to read to Wilfrid, Bishop of York, who seems to have given a certain encouragement to the slander by suffering it to be uttered at table in his presence.[1]

presbyter sentiat, videamus."—*Concil. Aquisgran.*, ii. præf., l. iii., ann. 836, ed. Coletti, ix. 875.

[1] "Hæc tristi mox admistione confudit, addendo videlicet, quod me audires a lascivientibus rusticis inter hæreticos per pocula decantari. . . . Exhorrui, fateor, et pallens percunctabar, cujus hæreseos arguerer. . . .

If, however, he had some enemies, he had more friends. Among these, in the first rank, it is pleasant to find the monks of Lindisfarne. Their friendship with Bede maintains and proves the link which, notwithstanding certain differences of origin and opinion, attaches the island-cradle of the Christian faith in Northumbria to the last of the great monastic foundations, and the last of the great monks who illustrated that glorious coast. Bede asked that his name should be inscribed on the roll of monks in the monastery founded by St Aïdan. He specially desired this favour in order that his soul after death might have a share in the masses and prayers of that numerous community as if he had been one of themselves.[1]

His intimacy with the monks of Lindisfarne.

This pious anxiety to assure himself of the help of prayer for his soul after his death is apparent at every step in his letters. It imprints the last seal of humble and true Christianity on the character of the great philosopher, whose life was so full of interest, and whose last days have been revealed to us in minute detail by an eyewitness. Although the

His last moments.

Quoniam illo præsente atque audiente insipientius sum prius appetitus conviciis, ipso etiam nunc audiente et dijudicante, . . . quam immeritus eadem convicia sum perpessus appareat. . . . Quod utique in cœna illa in qua poculo debrius culpare studuit."—*Epist. ad Plegwinum monachum*, t. i. p. 144-154. This Wilfrid is not the great St Wilfrid, but Wilfrid II., who was Bishop of York from 717 to 732, after St John of Beverley, and before Egbert.

[1] "Me defuncto, pro redemptione animæ meæ, quasi familiaris et vernaculi vestri, orare et missas facere, et nomen meum inter vestra scribere dignemini . . . ut in albo vestræ sanctæ congregationis meum nunc quoque nomen appareret."—*Præfatio ad Vit. S. Cuthberti.*

narrative has been often republished,[1] the reader does not tire of returning to it, and it must find a place here, for no historic document brings more clearly before our eyes the life, at once spiritual and literary, of the Anglo-Saxon cloisters. "You desire and expect of me," writes a monk of Yarrow to one of his absent brethren, "to tell you how Bede, our father and master, the beloved of God, departed from
17th April 734. this world. . . . Nearly a fortnight before Easter he was seized by an extreme weakness, in consequence of his difficulty of breathing, but without
26th May. great pain. He continued thus until Ascension, always joyous and happy, giving thanks to God day and night, and even every hour of the night and day. He gave us our lessons daily, and employed the rest of his time in chanting psalms; and passed every night, after a short sleep, in joy and thanksgiving, but without closing his eyes. From the moment of awaking he resumed his prayers and praises to God, with his arms in the form of a cross. O happy man! He sang sometimes texts from St Paul and other scriptures, sometimes lines in our own language, for he was very able in English poetry."[2] Here the narrator interrupts himself to

[1] In the last place by Ozanam, who has made a perfect picture of the life of Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Church of the eighth century. The name of the author of the narrative is Cuthbert; he was a disciple of Bede, and wrote from Yarrow to one of his fellow-pupils, named Cuthwine, who was established in a distant monastery, probably one belonging to the Celtic ritualists, according to a passage quoted by Lingard, *Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. ii. p. 197.

[2] "Lætus et gaudens . . . immo horis omnibus . . . totam noctem in

quote ten lines in Anglo-Saxon received from the lips of the dying Bede, and expressed in that short, sharp, and striking rhythm which characterises the verses of the shepherd Ceadmon, with which Bede has made us acquainted. "Before our forced departure," thus runs the song, "no man is more wise than he needs be; no man knows how much he ought to search, before leaving this world, what shall be the judgment of the soul for good or evil, after the day of death."[1] "He also sang," continues the witness, "anthems according to his liturgy and ours—among others, the following: 'O King of Glory, who now hast mounted in triumph above the skies, leave us not like orphans, but send us the spirit of truth promised to our fathers.' At these words, *like orphans*, he burst into tears. An hour after, he repeated the same anthem, and we mingled our tears with his. Sometimes we wept, and sometimes we read, but we never read without weeping. Thus passed the forty days from Easter to Ascension. He was always at the height of joy, thanking God for his sickness.[2] He said with St Paul, 'The Lord scourgeth every one that he receiveth;' and with St Ambrose, 'I

lætitia et gratiarum actione pervigil ducebat, nisi quantum modicus somnus impediret. . . . In nostra quoque lingua, quæ est Anglica, ut erat doctus in nostris carminibus, nonnulla dixit."

[1] These lines, omitted by Mabillon in his edition of Cuthbert's story, which is taken from Simeon of Durham, are found in a manuscript of St Gall, almost a contemporary of Bede, and there is no doubt of their authenticity. Cf. LINGARD, p. 409.

[2] "Prorupit in lacrymas . . . luximus cum illo . . . altera vice legimus, altera ploravimus. Immo semper cum fletu legimus ut tali lætitia dies usque ad diem deduximus, et ille multum gaudebat."

have not lived so as to blush at the thought of living with you; but I do not fear to die, because we have a good master.'[1]

"During all these days, in addition to the lessons he gave us and the psalms he sang with us, he undertook two pieces of work: a translation of the Gospel according to John into our English tongue for the use of the Church of God, and some extracts from Isidore, Bishop of Seville. 'For,' said he, 'I would not have my children read lies, nor that after my death they should give themselves up to fruitless work.' On the Tuesday before Ascension he found himself much worse; his breathing became difficult, and his feet were swollen. He continued, nevertheless, to dictate in good spirits, and sometimes added, 'Make haste to learn, for I know not how long I may remain with you, or if my Creator may call me shortly.' On the eve of the feast, at the first dawn of morning, he desired that what had been commenced should be quickly finished, and we worked till the hour of tierce. Then we went to the procession with the relics of the saints, as the solemn occasion required. But one of us remained by him and said to him, 'There is still a chapter wanting, beloved father; would it fatigue you to speak any more?' Bede answered, 'I am still able to speak; take your pen, make it, and write rapidly.' The other obeyed. At the hour of nones he sent for the priests of the monastery, and distri-

[1] S. PAULINUS, in *Vit. S. Ambrosii.*

buted to them incense, spices, and fine linen, which he had kept as precious things; then bade them farewell, praying each of them to say masses for him. Thus passed his last day till the evening. Then the disciple of whom I have spoken said to him, 'Beloved master, there remains only one verse which is not written.' 'Write it then quickly,' he answered. And the young man having completed it in a few minutes, cried, 'Now it is finished.' 'You say truly, it is finished,' he said. 'Take my head in your arms and turn me, for I have great consolation in turning towards the holy place where I have prayed so much.' Thus, lying on the floor of his cell, he sang for the last time, 'Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,' and gave up the ghost as he pronounced the last of these divine names."[1]

The monastic sanctuary towards which the dying look of Bede was turned still remains in part, if we may believe the best archæologists, and his memory has survived the changes of time. An old oaken chair is still shown which he is supposed to have used. It is the only existing relic of this great saint. For he was a saint by the same title

[1] "Nolo ut discipuli mei mendacium legant. . . . Totum illum diem hilariter dictabat. . . . Diserte cum festinatione. . . . Adhuc magister dilectissime, capitulum unum deest; videtur ne tibi difficile plus te interrogari? Facile est, accipe tuum calamum et tempera, et festinanter scribe. . . . Curre velociter et presbyteros adduc ad me. . . . Quædam pretiosa in mea capsella habes, id est piperem, oraria et incensa. . . . Accipe caput meum in manus tuas, quia multum me delectat sedere ex adverso loco sancto meo, in quo orare solebam. . . . In pavimento casulæ suæ decantans."

and in the same rank as the most illustrious in the Anglo-Saxon calendar. The title of Venerable, which was given to him only in the ninth century by a kind of universal consent, did not then as now imply an inferior position to that of saint or blessed in the celestial hierarchy. Like all the other saints of the period, without exception, he was canonised by popular veneration, tacitly approved by the Church. Various miracles established or confirmed the fame of his sanctity: altars were consecrated to his memory; many pilgrims came to Yarrow to visit his tomb; his relics were stolen in the eleventh century, as so often happened, by a priest inspired by too ardent devotion, and carried to Durham, where they were placed with those of St Cuthbert. They were an object of worship to the faithful up to the general profanation under Henry VIII., who pulled down the shrine and threw the bones on a dunghill along with those of all the other holy apostles and martyrs of Northumberland.[1]

[1] If we may believe a competent judge, Mr Jewitt (*Gentleman's Magazine*, Dec. 1864), the choir of the little church now standing at Yarrow is as old as the church built by Benedict Biscop, and *inhabited*, as we may say, by Venerable Bede. This is the remnant which was discovered roofless by the three monks who, according to Simeon of Durham, visited the ruins in 1075. The learned archæologist thinks that he recognises, in the ornaments and in the primitive bays of this choir, the characteristics of Saxon architecture. We confess that it is difficult to conceive how this low and petty construction can represent any portion whatever of the edifice built and ornamented with so much magnificence by the founder of Yarrow, and described with such enthusiasm by the most illustrious of his guests. The tower, indeed, which is of fine Norman or Roman architecture, may very well date from the partial restoration in 1075. An inscription, evidently more modern than its date, fixes the dedication of the church on April 24, 681, in the 15th

It must, however, be admitted that his place in the worship of the faithful has not lasted so long as the glory attached to his name and the great fame which, rising in his native country, spread so rapidly over all Christendom.[1] His fame did honour to monastic institutions in general. Bede appeared to the Catholic world a model of that virtue and knowledge which the cloister was to make the peculiar property of Christian society. In him the great Roman monachism which he had seen triumph over Celtic influences found its personification. The sword of his words, said his epitaph, was the safeguard of the fortresses occupied by his religious brethren.[2]

But it was especially the English nation, the last new-comer among Catholic nations, which had occasion to take pride in the great man given by her to Christendom. All the kingdoms of the Heptarchy claimed a share in the glory which could not be allowed to remain the exclusive possession of the Northumbrians—and the Anglo-Saxon mis-

year of King Egfrid, and *Ceolfridi abbatis ejusdem ecclesiæ Deo auctore conditoris, anno IV.*

[1] "Anglia te celebrat: te totus personat orbis."

—Ancient epitaph quoted by Leland, *Collectanea*, vol. iii. book iv. c. 23.

[2] "Crystallus patriæ, gregis astrum, lumen avorum,
Laus juris, bajulus legis, honorque jacet.
Beda datus sacris, gravitate senex, puer annis,
Devotæ mentis æthera thure replet. . . .
Ense pio verbi confratrum castra tuetur
Ne Christi miles, hoste ruente, ruat."

—Epitaph quoted by Mabillon from a MS. belonging to De Thou.

"Beda, Dei famulus, monachorum nobile sidus,
Finibus e terræ profuit Ecclesiæ."

—Another epitaph quoted by Arnold Wion.

sionaries, scattered through Germany, rivalled the monks who remained in their native island in the faithfulness of their devotion to his noble memory.[1]

The nations of Catholic Europe envied England the possession of so great a doctor, the first among the offspring of barbarous races who had won a place among the doctors of the Church. His illustrious successors, Boniface and Alcuin, emulated each other in celebrating his merits and services in the interest of souls, and in order to set him up as a permanent model to future generations.[2] Alcuin insists specially upon this with a precision of details which gives us one proof the more how entirely the likings and manners of the Anglo-Saxon conquerors of England are reflected in the tastes of the modern English. "Remember," he writes to the monks of the community of Yarrow which Bede had made famous—"remember the nobility of your fathers, and be not the unworthy sons of such great ancestors; look at your many books, at the beauty of your churches and monastic buildings. Let your young men

[1] "Et rectum quidem mihi videtur ut tota gens Anglorum in omnibus provinciis, ubicumque reperti sunt, gratias Deo referant, quia tam mirabilem virum illis in sua natione donavit."—S. Bonifacii et Lulli *Epist.*, ed. Jaffé, number 134. See the letter written by an abbot of Wearmouth to Lul, Archbishop of Mayence, thanking him for having sent from Germany a silken stuff intended to wrap the relics of Bede.

[2] "Rogamus ut aliqua de opusculis sagacissimi investigatorius Scripturarum Bedan (*sic*) monachi, quem nuper in domo Dei apud vos, vice candelæ ecclesiasticæ, scientia scripturarum fulsisse audivimus, conscripta nobis transmittere dignemini."—Bonifacii *Epist.*, 672, ed. Jaffé.

learn to persevere in the praises of God, and not in driving foxes out of their holes, or wearing out their strength running after hares. What folly to leave the footsteps of Christ, and run after the trail of a fox! Look at the noblest doctor of our country, Bede; see what zeal he showed for knowledge from his youth, and the glory which he has received among men, though that is much less important and less dazzling than his reward before God. Stir up, then, the minds of your sleepers by his example; study his works, and you will be able to draw from them, both for yourselves and others, the secret of eternal beauty."[1]

The fame of Bede has derived a special and increasing lustre from the fact that he was not only the first and most remarkable of Anglo-Saxons, but that, were he set aside, everything else concerning them would fall into obscurity;[2] thus it is not without reason that he has been compared to Homer, who rose like a resplendent meteor amid the night which precedes and the night which follows his appearance upon the horizon of Greek history.

[1] "Assuescant pueri laudibus astare superni Regis, non vulpium fodere cavernas, non leporum fugaces sequi cursus. Quam impium est Christi amittere obsequia et vulpium sequi vestigia! Discant pueri Scripturas sacras. . . . Recogitate nobilissimum hujus temporis magistrum Bedam presbyterum . . . qualem nunc habet inter homines laudem."—ALCUINI *Epist.* 13, ed. Froben, vol. i. p. 22.

[2] Certain contemporary chronicles find nothing to describe in the history of England during the seventh and eighth centuries except the existence of Bede. "Beda presbyter et monachus claret in Anglia."—*Chron. Holland Vetustiss.*, ad. an. 696, quoted by Mackintosh, vol. i. p. 83.

The dark night of idolatry which covered Northumbria before the holy predecessors and contemporaries of Bede, has been replaced by the dark night of industry. The working of the coal-mines has transformed the face of the country. The light of day is positively darkened by thick volumes and heavy clouds of smoke belched out without intermission by the manufactories and workshops which are fed by the inexhaustible mineral wealth of the country. Newcastle, North and South Shields, Sunderland, Stockton, Darlington, Hull, all the centres of the coal-trade, have replaced in the attention and regard of men the old monastic cradles of Christian faith and civilisation, Lindisfarne and Yarrow, Tynningham and Coldingham, Tynemouth and Wearmouth, Hartlepool and Whitby. But what a contrast, even if we go no further than the surface, between the aspect of the country of old and that of to-day! The much-prized coal has covered this fine country with a veil of mourning. The verdure of the woods and fields is discoloured by it, the limpid waters soiled, the purity of the air infected, the light of the sun intercepted. Everything disposes us to believe that these are but material tokens of the internal and moral darkness, in the midst of which struggles the vast and formidable population which swarms in those craters of British commerce. The frightful density of these unknown and impenetrable masses conceals abysses of ignorance, vice, wretchedness, and resentment.

There Paganism is restored. Notwithstanding many generous efforts, partial remedies, and honourable exceptions—notwithstanding the observance, still compulsory and respected, of the Sunday rest,—the love of lucre has created armies of slaves, tools without souls, but already longing, and with good reason, for a better fate, for a condition less painful than that, the duration and aggravation of which ought to fill with trembling every Christian and patriotic heart.

The light of faith and the moral law is still more wanting to them than daylight. Buried alive in their mines and manufactories, without pontiffs, without spiritual guides, a prey to all the disorders, excesses, and forgetfulnesses which ever accompany the labour of a crowd, strangers to the thought of God, to any hope in a future life, to habits of modesty,[1] victims and instruments of the worship of mammon, they stand there like a perpetual menace to the blind egotism and formalism of the materialists of our age.

No man can admire more than I do the marvels of human intelligence and activity realised by the free genius of the English race; no man does more sincere homage to its natural and unconquerable instincts of religion. But who could behold without fear, in that district, once so fruitful in sanctuaries of prayer, virtue, and moral and intellectual

[1] See vol. iv. p. 441, note 2, what has been said of the facts revealed by the Parliamentary Commission in the coal districts.

life, the religious indifference and fierce thirst for gain which replace almost everywhere the tender and vigilant solicitude of the Church for souls? Who could be other than alarmed at sight of the deserted condition, the spiritual nullity, in which so many millions of our fellow-creatures are living? How can we cease to regret the days when the obedient fervour of the people answered so well to the zeal, knowledge, and disinterestedness of the clergy? and when, like the lighthouses which we now see everywhere, on the headlands, at the river's mouth, at the edge of rocky reefs, and along all the course of that dangerous and much frequented coast, offering their tutelary light to the sailor, there rose upon those shores, then desert, unknown, and inhabited only by a few savages, the sparkling lights, increasing from year to year, of Lindisfarne, Yarrow, Whitby, Coldingham, Wearmouth, and Tynemouth—centres of intellectual and moral life, as laborious as it was pure!

Perhaps the day may yet come—and may it not be far distant!—when, as of old, amid the wonders and perils of modern activity, new centres of charity, enlightenment, and peace may light up one after the other, like so many celestial beacons to guide and warn souls in their pilgrimage towards eternal life.

# CHAPTER V.

## THE ROYAL MONKS.

The star of Northumbria pales, notwithstanding the erection of the see of York into an archbishopric.—Sad end of the lineage of Oswy.—King Ceolfrid, to whom Bede dedicates his History, becomes a monk at Lindisfarne.—His successor Eadbert follows his example.—Other monk-kings.—Almost each dynasty of the Heptarchy furnishes its share: In East Anglia, Sigebert, who dies on the field of battle; In Essex, Sebbi, who leads back his people to the faith—his desire to die in solitude; and Offa, who dies at Rome; In Mercia, which inherited the preponderating power of Northumbria, Coenred, the travelling companion and fellow-novice of Offa; Ethelred, founder, monk and abbot of Bardeney.—Another Mercian king, Ceolred, dies in a debauch.—Ethelbald, pursued by Ceolred, takes refuge in the marsh of Croyland with the hermit Guthlac, who predicts to him that he will be King of Mercia.—What Guthlac had been before he became an anchorite.—His solitary life resembles those of some of the most illustrious saints of the monastic order.—Death of Guthlac.—Foundation of the celebrated Abbey of Croyland upon the site of his cell.—Continuation and end of the reign of Ethelbald.—Remonstrances of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries in Germany.—The supremacy passes from Mercia to Wessex.—Three West Saxon kings abdicate to become monks or pilgrims to Rome: Centwin; Ceadwalla, the friend of Wilfrid, who lives just long enough to be baptised by the Pope; and Ina, the friend of St Aldhelm.—Reign of Ina, the legislator, victor, and pacificator of the Britons; restorer of the Celtic sanctuary of Glastonbury, the first protector of St Boniface.—In consequence of a surprise prepared for him by his wife, he goes to Rome as a penitent to die, and founds the *Schola Saxonum* there.—Crowd of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims of both sexes to Rome.—Abuses and disorders.—False monks and false pilgrims.—The age of gold a chimera in the Church as elsewhere.

"Must lose
The name of king? O' God's name, let it go.
I'll give my jewels for a set of beads,
My gorgeous palace for a hermitage;
My gay apparel for an almsman's gown;
My figured goblets for a dish of wood;
My sceptre for a palmer's walking staff;
My subjects for a pair of carved saints;
And my large kingdom for a little grave,
A little, little grave, an obscure grave."
—SHAKESPEARE, *Richard II.*

BEDE dedicated his *History of the English* to the king of his dear Northumbria, Ceolwulf, whose tender solicitude for monastic interests made him hope for an approaching reform of the abuses of ecclesiastical government in the north of England.[1] But two years after the death of the great monastic historian, Ceolwulf himself became a monk. He was of the race of Ida the Burner, sprung, however, from another branch than that from which came all those descendants of Ethelfrid the Ravager, whose connection with Aïdan and Wilfrid, Hilda and Ebba, Lindisfarne and Melrose, has already occupied us so long.

Sad end of the line of Oswy. 705-716

The line of Ethelfrid had come to a sad conclusion in that young Osred, who came to the throne during the last struggles of Wilfrid, and whom the people had taken pleasure in regarding as the adopted son of the great bishop.[2] Far from walking in the footsteps of his father Aldfrid and his grandfather Oswy, he has left no trace of sympathy with the institutions and ideas represented

[1] "Pro insita sibi dilectione pietatis, quicquid ad regulam pietatis pertinet, firma protinus intentione adjuvare curabit."—*Epist. ad Ecgbertum*, c. 5.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 335.

among the Anglo-Saxons by the monks. From an early age he manifested all the inclinations of a tyrant, abandoning himself to frequent explosions of wild passion, which show only too clearly how hard was the task of the doctors and ministers of Christian purity among the Teutonic races. It was the delight of his precocious and impetuous libertinism to outrage virgins consecrated to the Lord, and he went from monastery to monastery to seek his sacrilegious prey.[1] On the other hand, he obliged the nobles whom he oppressed, when he deigned to spare their lives in his massacres, to be shaven, and to bury themselves against their will in the cloisters.[2] A violent death put a stop to his evil ways.

Licentiousness of the young king Osred. 716.

But already the star of Northumbria had paled beyond remedy. The final erection of the great northern bishopric of York into a metropolis, to which all the bishoprics north of the Humber were to be

The fortunes of Northumbria begin to fail.

[1] "Osredum spiritus luxuriæ fornicantem et per monasteria nonnarum sacratas virgines stuprantem et furentem agitavit, usquequo ipse gloriosum regnum et juvenilem vitam et ipsam luxuriosam animam contemptibili et despecta morte perdidit."—S. BONIFACII *Epist.* 59 *ad Ethelbaldum.* "Turpem vitam sanctimonialium stupris exagitans."—GUILL. MALMESBUR., i. 53.

[2] "Non proceres veneratus erat: non denique Christum.
Hic igitur multos miseranda morte peremit.
Ast alios cogit summo servire parenti,
Inque monasterii attonsos consistere septis. . . .
Anglorum proceres nimium trucidante tyranno
Servitium Domini miles præfatus inibat."

—ETHELWOLFI *Carmen de Abbatibus et Viris Piis Lindisfarnens.*, c. 2 and 4. Mabillon (*Act. SS. O. S. B.*, t. iv. p. 317), in publishing this poem, proved that, notwithstanding its title, this was not the great Monastery of Lindisfarne of which we have so largely spoken, but another monastery of the same name, founded by Duke Eadmund, "dux nobilis natu et moribus," one of those whom King Osred forced to become monks.

subject, was not sufficient to restore to Northumbria the power which she had exercised under kings like Oswald and Oswy and bishops like Aïdan and Wilfrid. Egbert, the Bishop of York, the correspondent of Bede, and a prince of the reigning dynasty, obtained from Pope Gregory II., after repeated requests, the re-establishment of the metropolitan dignity, which had been at first bestowed upon the see of York by St Gregory the Great, but which, since the flight of Paulinus, had fallen into disuse, and which the later decrees of Popes Vitalianus and Agathon had seemed to sacrifice to the supremacy of Canterbury. This restoration, however, was of advantage only to the splendour of the new metropolis, and in no way to the kingdom of which it was the capital, as indeed the authority of Canterbury, so long universal and always undisputed, had not given the slightest supremacy over the rest of the Heptarchy to the kings of Kent.

King Ceolwulf becomes a monk at Lindisfarne.

After two obscure reigns, Ceolwulf attempted in vain to struggle against the disorder and decadence of his country. He was vanquished, and made captive by enemies whose names are not recorded, and had to submit, as happened to more than one Merovingian prince, to receive the tonsure by compulsion, and was shut up in a convent. He escaped, however, regained the crown, and reigned for some time in a manner which gained the applause of Bede, and weighed with the Pope in his decision in

respect to the metropolis of York. But, after a reign of eight years, a regret, or an unconquerable desire, for that monastic life which had been formerly forced upon him against his will, seized him. He made the best provisions possible for the security of his country, and for a good understanding between the spiritual and temporal authorities, nominating as his successor a worthy prince of his race, the brother of Archbishop Egbert. Then giving up the cares of power, and showing himself truly the master of the wealth he resigned, he cut his long beard, had his head shaved in the form of a crown, and retired to bury himself anew at Lindisfarne, in the chief monastic sanctuary of his country. He there passed the last thirty years of his life in study and happiness.[1] He had, while king, enriched this monastery with many great gifts, and obtained permission for the use of wine and beer for monks who, up to that time, according to the rigid rule of ancient Catholic discipline, had been allowed no beverage but water and milk. 737-767.

His successor, Eadbert, followed his example. After having, during a reign of twenty-one years, victoriously contended against the Picts, Scots, Mercians, and Welsh—after having received presents and offers of alliance from the first of the His successor, Eadbert, follows his example.

[1] "Vere beatus et litterarum scientia sufficienter constitutus."—GUILL. MALMESBUR., i. 64. "Sponte divitiarum non servus, sed dominus, quasi magnus viles abjecit."—HENRI HUNTINGD. *Hist.*, l. iv. p. 340. "Barbam deposuit, coronam accepit."—SIMEON DUNELM., *De Gest. Reg.*, p. 69, and 139, ap. TWYSDEN, vol. 1.

Carlovingians, Pepin the Short,—he became a monk at York, where he had already founded what was then called a very noble library, and where he enrolled himself among the monks who constituted the clergy of his brother the archbishop's metropolis. He lived there for two years, preferring, says an annalist, the service of God to all the kingdoms of the earth, and rapt by his violent love for the celestial country.[1] Care has been taken to prove that he received the Roman tonsure, that of St Peter, and not that of the Celts, which is the last mention in history of a difference which, a century earlier, had stirred up so many tempests.[2]

Other monk-kings.

These two kings of Northumbria were not the first or only ones who embraced monastic life. Eadbert, indeed, is the eighth pointed out by English chroniclers as having preferred the eight beatitudes of voluntary poverty to the grandeurs of this world.[3] Certain annalists even go so far as to count more than thirty kings or queens of the different Anglo-Saxon kingdoms who entered the new cloisters during the seventh and eighth centuries.[4]

What transformation had thus passed upon those heathens, savage descendants of Odin, impetuous

[1] SIM. DUNELM., *Hist. Dunelm. Eccles.*, l. ii. c. 3, *ibid.*

[2] "Dei amoris causa et cœlestis patriæ violentia, accepta S. Petri tonsura."—*App. ad Bedam*, ann. 758.

[3] "Qui pro regno temporali commutaverunt æternum, ut octo beatitudinum jucunditatem, quæ voluntariæ paupertati debetur, pro futuro haberent in cœlis."—RICH. CIRENC., p. 242. Mabillon counts eight before Eadbert, who is the ninth on his list.—*Act. SS. O. S. B.*, vol. iii. p. 463.

[4] STEVENS, continuation of DUGDALE, vol. i. p. 19.

and bloody chieftains of a race which breathed only war and pillage, and knew no greater shame than to die a peaceful death! We see them penetrated by the spirit of gentleness and concord, seeking union, fraternity, even equality, and that sometimes with the humblest of their subjects, under the Benedictine habit, in the nightly chant of psalms, in the peaceful labours of agriculture or of the monastic library. They sought, they aspired to that retreat, as the crown of their warlike exploits and their political and military career. But it was little to the satisfaction of the Anglo-Saxons to see themselves thus abandoned by their kings. The spirit of proud independence which made them, like all the other Teutonic nations, so often rebellious and intractable, did not expel from their minds a passionate affection, or rather a mysterious worship, for the old blood of the first chiefs of the conquest. They made vain efforts to keep their kings back from the cloister, and reserved to themselves the right of reclaiming them by their own will or against it, in order to put them at the head of the army, and march against the enemy under their orders. Such was the fate, as has been seen,[1] of King Sigebert of East Anglia, the first of the Anglo-Saxons who entered the cloister, and who, torn from his cell by his desperate subjects to lead them against the pitiless Penda, ended his life, like so many of his heathen ancestors, on the field of battle.

[1] Vol. iv. p. 93.

Each dynasty furnished its contingent to the monastic order.

Each of the dynasties of the Heptarchy furnished in succession its contingent to the new army. Like the Uffings of East Anglia, and the descendants of the Man of Fire in Northumberland, the children of the god Saxnote, whom the baptised Saxons[1] were made to abjure along with the gods Thor and Woden, had also their tonsured king. This race reigned over the Saxons of the East, whom King Sebbi had the happiness of bringing back to the faith, after their first defection.[2] The same king, who had reigned for thirty years as a faithful soldier of the King of kings, obtained, not without difficulty, the consent of his wife to enable him to assume before he died the monastic dress for which he had long sighed. But though he thus believed himself to have become a monk indeed, this descendant of Scandinavian gods and heroes, with the heart of a king under his monastic robe, feared, according to Bede, that, dying in his bed, he might seem to be overcome by suffering.[3] In the anguish of his last illness, he trembled lest, while struggling against the terrors of death, pain might tear from him cries or gestures unworthy

Sebbi, King of Essex.

665-695.

[1] LAPPENBERG, p. 114.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 110.

[3] "Vitam privatam et monachicam cunctis regni divitiis et honoribus præferens, quam et olim jam, si non obstinatus conjugis animus divortium negaret, subiisset. . . . Cumque annos triginta in regno miles regni cœlestis exegisset . . . habitum religionis, quem diu desiderabat, accepit. . . . Correptus infirmitate maxima, timere cœpit homo animi regalis, ne ad mortem veniens, tanto affectus dolore, aliquid indignum suæ personæ vel ore proferret vel aliorum motu gereret membrorum."—BEDE, iv. 11.

of him. For this reason he would have no spectator of his last moments except the Bishop of London. This prelate, who had invested him with the monk's black robe, had the consolation of seeing him give up his last sigh in perfect peace, and buried him in his own monastic cathedral of St Paul, where, for a thousand years, until the time of the great fire which consumed that famous 1666.
edifice under Charles II., was to be seen the immense stone coffin which contained the body of the monk-king, whose frame must have been as gigantic as his heart was manful.[1]

Fifteen years after the death of Sebbi, his successor and grandnephew, King Offa, imitated his example while still in the fulness of youth and all delights. Though a man beloved and sought after by all, he gave up his betrothed bride, his family, country, and crown, and, resisting the passionate remonstrances of his subjects, went away to embrace monastic life, not even in an English cloister, but at Rome. The young Offa was accompanied in his pilgrimage and sacrifice by Coenred, the King of the Mercians, detached on his side from the world by witnessing the last moments of one of his best knights,[2]

Offa, King of Essex. 709.

Coenred, King of Mercia.

[1] Note by Smith in his edition of Bede. "This is the first example I know of the devout idea so general, in later ages, of dying in the dress of a monk."—FLEURY, l. xi. c. 3.

[2] "Vir in laico habitu atque officio militari positus."—BEDE, v. 13. William of Malmesbury calls him "miles."—*Gest. Reg. Angl.*, l. i. c. 78. Turner proves that the order of knighthood existed among the Anglo-Saxons long before the Norman conquest.—*Hist. of Anglo-Saxons*, book viii. c. 12.

who died in despair from having voluntarily kept back from confession.[1] Before leaving England, they were both present at the last act of the great Wilfrid's apostolic life—the dedication of the new Monastery of Evesham, which they had endowed and freed from all temporal jurisdiction.[2] When they arrived at Rome, both these kings received the tonsure and cowl from the hands of Pope Constantinus, before the Confession of St Peter, and, after some years of penitent life, they passed from the tomb of the apostles to celestial blessedness, to enjoy the society of the saints for ever.[3]

Mercia becomes the most important nation of the Heptarchy. 670-685.

Since the death of the last Northumbrian Bretwalda, Oswy, and especially since the overthrow of his son Egfrid in his struggle with the Picts, Mercia had acquired the ascendancy which was departing from Northumbria. The Mercians, under the warlike descendants of the terrible Penda, and thanks to the military spirit which inspired its people and race, swayed the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy for nearly a century. Coenred, who died a monk at Rome

[1] The vision of this knight may be read in Bede, *l. c.* Two other passages in Bede (iii. 22 and v. 10) seem to prove that in his time the word "miles" was applied not only to all fighting men, but to nobles or patricians.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 351.

[3] "Coinred qui regno Merciorum nobilissime tempore aliquanto præfuit, nobilius multo sceptra regni reliquit . . . monachus factus ad limina Apostolorum, in precibus, jejuniis, et eleemosynis, usque ad diem permansit ultimum. . . . Offa juvenis amantissimæ ætatis et venustatis, totæque suæ genti ad tenenda servandaque regni sceptra exoptatissimus . . . reliquit uxorem, agros, cognatos et patriam, attonsus et in monachico vitam habitu complens, ad visonem beatorum apostolorum in cœlis diu desideratam pervenit."—BEDA, *Hist. Eccles.*, v. 19.

after having fought valiantly against the Britons, was Penda's grandson ; and he was far from being the only recruit which the family of the dauntless champion of old Paganism was to furnish to the monastic order.[1] His own son, and second successor, Ethelred, the predecessor of Coenred upon the throne of Mercia, touched by divine grace, after a long and warlike reign, entered as a simple monk into the Monastery of Bardeney which he had founded, and ruled it for ten years as abbot before he died the death of a saint.[2] This is the Ethelred with whom we have already made acquaintance, first as the enemy and then as the devoted friend of Wilfrid,[3] whose cause he sustained with all the authority conferred on him by his double rank as monk and monarch.

Ethelred, King of Mercia, becomes a monk at Bardeney. 704-716.

These two kings, however, who were so entirely devoted to the Benedictine institution as to enroll themselves in it till the end of their worthy exist-

Excesses of King Ceolred. 709-771.

[1] See in the Appendix the table of his monastic descendants. The line of Mercian kings after Penda is as follows :—

626-655. Penda.
656-675. Wulphere, son of Penda.
675-704. Ethelred, brother of Wulphere.
704-709. Coenred, son of Wulphere.
709-716. Coelred, son of Ethelred.
716-757. Ethelbald, called *Clito*, grandson of a brother of Penda.
757-797. Offa, great-grandson of the same.

It is well known that among the Merovingians it was often the eldest or most popular prince of the reigning dynasty who succeeded to the crown to the injury of the direct heir, who might regain his rights at a later period if he lived long enough to see the question of the succession once more opened.

[2] "Omnipotentis benignitate visitatus fit monachus." — HENRIC. HUNTINGD., *Hist.*, l. iv. p. 337.

[3] See vol. iv. p. 332.

ence, were succeeded on the throne of Mercia by a prince of a very different stamp. Ceolred, like the young Northumbrian king of whom we recently spoke, did not content himself with despising the rights and liberties guaranteed to the monasteries by the charters of his predecessors; he took from them the young and beautiful virgins there consecrated to the Lord, for the gratification of his own passions. He died in one of his orgies among his earls, not only unrepentant, but calling upon the devil, and cursing the Christian priests with their Gospel.[1] It was perhaps the last outbreak of conquered heathenism: not certainly that heathen morals and lusts were for ever extirpated from the bosom of these wild races, but since that time their ascendancy has never been so great as to lead an Anglo-Saxon prince to the point of making a public denial of the Gospel.

The *Clito* Ethelbald, pursued by Ceolred,

After this worthy grandson of the savage Penda, the Mercian throne fell to a collateral scion of the race, Ethelbald, known under the name of *Clito* or *Childe*, which was then used among the Anglo-Saxons, as that of *Infanto* in Spain at a later period, to designate the princes of the reigning dynasty. Ethelbald, who was savagely pursued

[1] "In stupratione et adulterio nonnarum commorans . . . nam Ceolredum prædecessorem tuum stupratorem sanctimonialium et ecclesiasticorum privilegiorum fractorem splendide cum suis comitibus epulantem spiritus malignus invasit . . . sine pœnitentia et confessione, furibundus et cum diabolo sermocinans, et sacerdotes Dei abominans . . . ad tormenta inferni migravit."—S. BONIFACII *Epist. ad Ethelbaldum Regem Mercionum*, n. 62, ed. Giles; 17, ed. Serrar.

by Ceolred, had a stormy and hard youth. He was not himself a monk, but his history is connected with that of one of the most holy and popular monks of the eighth century.[1] In the course of his wanderings from province to province and from stronghold to stronghold, while flying with some devoted companions from the persecution of his pitiless enemy, he learned that a young and warlike chief called Guthlac, sprung, like himself, from the royal race of Mercia, had retired from the world to consecrate himself to study and prayer, in an island surrounded by the marshes which then covered a great district on the borders of Mercia and East Anglia. Ethelbald put himself under the guidance of a neighbouring abbot, who knew the country sufficiently to find his way through the black and stagnant waters and muddy soil of these inaccessible marshes, and the two reached Croyland in a fisher's boat. In this watery retreat abode the good and pious Guthlac, and there the fugitive found a hospitable welcome and a safe shelter. He did not continue long there: when rest had given him renewed confidence, he left the refuge in which Ceol-

Takes refuge with the solitary, Guthlac,

[1] The learned and accurate Philippe Jaffé, the last editor of the *Epistles of St Boniface*, believes King Ethelbald to have been in his youth a pupil of St Aldhelm. He attributes to him the letter addressed to that holy abbot, which is published with those of St Boniface (ed. Jaffé, No. 5) and those of Aldhelm (ed. Giles, p. 100). But the letter itself seems to prove that it is the work of a young ecclesiastic, and not of a prince unacquainted, as Ethelbald must have been, with the life of the cloister. It was very probably the same student to whom Aldhelm addressed the answer, a fragment of which we have quoted above at page 34 of this volume.

red neither could nor dared reach him, to resume his life of adventure. But new dangers led him again and again to Croyland, where Guthlac always received him with the same affection, and lavished upon him, in their long and frequent conversations, the spiritual consolations and varied instruction which he needed. He had a cell beside that of Guthlac, his sole friend and consoler.[1] One day, returning from one of his dangerous journeys, during which he had found himself separated from all his followers, closely surrounded by enemies, and at the end of his strength and resources, he arrived exhausted and desperate, and threw himself into the arms of his protector and friend. "Dear child," said Guthlac, "I know all your troubles and misfortunes; I have followed your laborious career from its beginning; for this reason I have prayed God much for you, and he has granted my prayer. I announce to you in His name that you shall one day reign over your native country. You shall see the defeat of your enemies; you shall overcome them sword in hand; you shall trample them under your feet, and become the master of all their possessions. Learn only to wait: the kingdom will come to you, not by rapine and violence, but from the hand of God, when that hand shall have demolished the wicked man who now reigns, and who shall pass away like a shadow."[2] From that moment Ethel-

Who predicts that he will be King of Mercia.

[1] "In quadam casula . . . Guthlaci qui solus refugium et consolatio laborum ipsius erat."— *Vita S. Guthl.*, c. 39.

[2] "Est in mediterraneorum Anglorum partibus immensæ magnitudi-

bald placed his hope in God alone, and waited with trust and patience. The prophecy was accomplished two years after: Ceolred perished in his orgies,[1] and the *Childe* was immediately recognised as king by all the Mercians.

Guthlac; his life as an adventurer and as a hermit. 673-714.

The hermit who with so much confidence prophesied to the future King of Mercia, sprang himself from the dynasty which reigned over the greater part of the Heptarchy.[2] His youth had been spent in fight and pillage, like that of all the princes and lords of his time. Excited by the recollection of the exploits of his ancestors, he dreamed only of battles and devastation, and at the head of a numerous band of friends and dependants he vanquished his enemies, sacked many towns and castles, and collected immense booty. But his companions observed with surprise that he had so much pity left as to restore to those whom

nis sacerrima palus, nunc stagnis, nunc flactris, interdum nigris vaporibus et laticibus, necnon crebris insularum nemoribus intervenientibus, et flexuosis rivigarum anfractibus . . , protenditur. . . . Arrepta piscatoria scaphula. . . . Cum huc illucque . . . in diversis nationibus jactaretur . . . usque ad præfatam insulam pervenit. . . . Alio die, deficiente virium ipsius valitudine, suorumque inter dubia pericula, postquam inanitæ vires defecere, tandem ad colloquium sancti viri Guthlaci, ut assolebat, pervenit. . . . O mi puer, laborum tuorum non sum expers, miseriarum tuarum ab exordio vitæ non sum inscius . . . misertus calamitatis tuæ rogavi Dominum ut subveniret tibi. . . . Tribuet tibi dominationem gentis tuæ. . . . Terga eorum videbis et gladius tuus vincet adversarios tuos."—*Vita S. Guthlaci, auctore* FELICE *monacho ejus æquali*, ap. *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, sæc. iii. pars 1, ad ann. 714.

[1] See above, p. 112.

[2] "Hujus viri progenies, per nobilissima illustrium regum nomina, antiqua ab origine Icles digesto ordine cucurrit."—*Vita*, c. 4. This Icles was the fifth ancestor of the terrible Penda.

he robbed a third part of their goods. He led this bandit life, which was supposed among his countrymen to be heroic, from the age of fifteen to that of twenty-four. But one night, while he camped with all his followers in a forest, his imagination suddenly presented before him the crimes, excesses, and miserable end of the kings of his race, then his own inevitable and perhaps approaching death, and the nothingness of the wealth and fame which he had sought. He felt himself as if burnt up by an internal flame—the flame of celestial desires. His decision was made on the spot. As soon as the first song of the birds announced the dawn he awoke his comrades, and told them to choose another chief, as he had just devoted himself, for his own part, to the service of Jesus Christ. Then, in spite of their remonstrances, cries, and lamentations, he instantly set out, carrying with him only a broad and short sword, such as was worn by labourers.[1] Doubtless this was to defend himself during the long and solitary journey which he had before him, for he went alone, and far from his native district and his friends, to knock at the door

[1] "Cum juvenili in pectore egregius dominandi amor fervesceret, valida priscorum heroum facta reminiscens. . . . Cum adversantium sibi urbes et villas, vicos et castella igne ferroque vastaret . . . tertiam partem agregatæ gazæ possidentibus remittebat. . . . Post tot prædas, cædes, rapinas . . . lassi quieverunt. . . . Quadam nocte . . . extemplo spiritualis flamma omnia præcordia viri incendere cœpit. . . . Antiquorum regum stirpis suæ per transacta sæcula miserabiles exitus et flagitiosum vitæ terminum contemplans . . . ecce subito . . . cum sol demoverat ortum, in quo matutinæ volucres avido forcipe pipant."—*Vita*, c. 10, 11.

of one of those double monasteries, governed by abbesses, several of which already existed in England, and where the humility of the monk was so much the more tried that he was subject to a woman as superior.[1] He there assumed the monastic habit, having his long hair cut, according to the form of the Roman, not the Celtic, tonsure, as his biographer takes pains to tell us. There he passed two years, dedicated to the study of the Holy Scriptures, 697-69.
of cenobitic customs, and of liturgical music.[2] At twenty-six his soul was illuminated by a new light while reading the life of the Fathers in the desert; he determined to plunge into a deeper and more austere solitude, and it was then that he betook himself to the marshy forests of Croyland. He found there an ancient *tumulus*, already excavated by the greed of the neighbouring population, who expected to find treasure there. They had dug it into a sort of pit. The fierce young Mercian prince fitted it with a penthouse of straw, made it his home, and there ended his life.

There are various features in this life which are to be found in those of the most illustrious saints of the monastic order. Like St Benedict, Guthlac

[1] At Ripadun, or Repton, situated on the Trent. The name of the abbess was Elfrida. This abbey, where the kings of Mercia were buried, was destroyed by the Danes, and replaced under the Normans by a priory of regular canons.

[2] "Mysticam S. Petri apostolorum principis tonsuram accepit. . . . Sacris litteris et monasticis disciplinis erudiebatur . . . psalmis, canticis, orationibus precibusque ecclesiasticis per biennium imbutus." — *Vita*, c. 13.

excited by his austerities the ill-will of his brethren. With true Anglo-Saxon spirit, they reproached him specially for his unalterable resolution never to drink either beer or hydromel, nor wine, except in the communion.[1] Like St Columba, his solitude was continually disturbed by crowds of the faithful attracted by the increasing fame of his holiness, and who surmounted all the obstacles which Nature had heaped around his island retreat to seek light, consolation, and the healing of their infirmities; he was sought by all conditions of men from all quarters, abbots and earls, rich and poor, monks and laymen; and these not only from all parts of Mercia, but from the most distant corners of England.[2]

Like the Fathers of the desert, he was exposed to a thousand temptations, a thousand diabolical visions, the most curious of which, in a historical point of view, is that which makes it apparent that the Cambrian or British marauders were not afraid of crossing the whole breadth of the island to disturb their conquerors even in East Anglia. It is told that Guthlac was much comforted by discovering that the enemies by whom he had felt his cell to be surrounded and threatened all the night

[1] "Non ullius inebriantis liquoris aut alicujus libaminis haustum. . . . Hac ex causa omnibus fratribus illic cohabitantibus aspero odio habebatur."—*Vita*, c. 12.

[2] "Inter densas arundinum compages . . . abbates, fratres, comites, divites, vexati, pauperes . . . confluebant. . . . Loca spinosa sine calle agresti rura gradiendo, inruit (quidam comes exsulis Ethelbaldi) in spinulam sub incultæ telluris herbis latentem."—*Vita*, c. 24, 31.

through, were demons and not Welsh, as he had supposed them to be by their hoarse voices and guttural accents.[1]

Like many holy monks of Celtic countries and of Merovingian Gaul, he lived in a close and touching familiarity with all living creatures, and especially with the birds who inhabited the trees and great reeds of his island. The crows served him with docility as messengers, the swallows came twittering to seat themselves on his shoulders or knees, on his head or breast; and he, on his side, built them nests with his own hands, little baskets made of rushes and bits of straw, which he placed under the thatch of his cell, and to which his gentle guests returned yearly, seeking their accustomed dwelling-places. "My father," said an astonished visitor, "how have you managed to give those daughters of solitude so much trust in you?" "Know you not," answered Guthlac, "that he who is united to God in purity of heart, sees in his turn all created things unite themselves to him? The birds of heaven, like the angels, seek those who do not seek the society of men."[2]

[1] "Cum Britones, infesti hostes Saxonici generis, bellis, prædis publicisque vastationibus Anglorum gentem deturbarent. . . . Quadam nocte . . . extra cellulam egressus, et erectis auribus adstans verba loquentis vulgi Britannicaque agmina tectis succedere agnoscit: nam ille . . . inter illos exsulabat, quoadusque eorum stridulentas loquelas intelligere valuit." —*Vita*, c. 20.

[2] "Velut magna lætitia avino forcipe flexuosi gutturis carmen canentes, veluti ad assuetas sedes . . . sese humeris viri Dei imposuerunt, ac deinde cantulis vocibus garrulentes. . . . Utquid incultæ solitudinis volucres. . . . Nonne legisti quia qui Deo puro spiritu copulabitur, omnia

Like St Romuald, he inspired the surrounding population with so much reverence for him, that speculations began to be made during his life on the price of his relics; the monk who came to him every twenty days to renew his tonsure thought seriously of using his razor to cut his throat, with the conviction that the place in which so great a saint perished would be enriched by the veneration of kings and princes.[1]

And finally, like St Cuthbert, he had a friend, a noble and pious abbess, daughter of the King of the East Anglians, who offered to him, in testimony of their mutual affection, a leaden coffin and a shroud.[2] He accepted these presents; and although he had vowed to wear neither woollen nor linen, but to dress himself entirely in the skins of beasts, he consented, for the love of Edburga, that his body should be buried in the linen which she had woven for him.[3] He died after a week of severe suffering, but having still strength enough to rise and say mass on the day of his death, and afterwards to

His death. 11th April 714.

sibi in Deo conjunguntur, et qui ab hominibus cognosci denegat, agnosci a feris et frequentari ab angelis quærit?"—*Vita*, c. 25.

[1] "Quidam clericus, nomine Beccelinus. . . . Cum, ut adsolebat, post bis denos dierum cursus tonderare devenisset . . . proponens ut si ipsum interimere potuisset, locum ipsius postea cum magna regum principumque venerantia habiturus foret."—*Ibid.*, c. 21.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 415.

[3] "Reverentissima virgo virginum Christi et sponsarum Egburga abbatissa, Aldulfi regis filia. . . . Nolui quidem juvenis ullo lineo tegmine corpus meum tegere, sed pro amore dilectæ Christi virginis, quæ hæc munera mihi mittebat."—*Ibid.*, c. 33, 35. Egburga or Edburga then governed the same Monastery of Repton from which Guthlac had issued to shut himself up in Croyland.

take the holy viaticum himself from the altar. He was still young; and during the fifteen years which he had passed in these marshes, had yet retained, in the midst of his austere solitude, that grave kindness and light-heartedness which are the inalienable inheritance of true monks and saints.[1]

On receiving news of the death of his friend, Ethelbald hastened to the body of him who so long protected his misfortune and consoled his misery. He threw himself, bathed in tears, on his knees before the coffin. "My father," he cried, "thou who hast known all my sufferings, and who hast sustained me in all dangers, as long as thou livedst I could never despair. Thanks to thee, I know how to call upon the Lord, who has saved me up to this day. But if thou forsakest me, to whom can I have recourse? who will help, who will comfort me?"

The following night, in the midst of his tears and prayers, Guthlac appeared to him, resplendent with light, to confirm his ancient prediction, and to announce the end of his trials.[2]

And in fact, two years after, Ethelbald succeeded to the throne of Mercia, which he occupied

[1] "Ut adsolebat hilari vultu secessit; nam semper gratia eximiæ charitatis in ore ipsius et vultu fulgebat."—*Vita*, c. 25.

[2] "Pater mi, tu scis miserias meas, tu semper adjutor mei fuisti, te vivente non desperabam in angustiis. . . . Hæc proloquens, se solo sternebat, et supplex orans crebris lacrymarum fluentis totum vultum rigavit. . . . Totam cellulam immensi luminis splendore circumfulgescere vidit. . . . Noli tristari, dies enim miseriæ tuæ præterierunt. . . . Nec illum fides fefellit: ex illo enim tempore usque in hodiernum diem infulata regni ipsius felicitas per tempora consequentia de die in diem crescebat."—*Ibid.*, c. 39.

for forty years. The first use which he made of his power was to found a monastery at Croyland, in honour of him whom he continued to call his friend and consoler. Notwithstanding the difficulties involved in such a building, an immense abbey, richly endowed, and inhabited by a colony of monks brought from the new Abbey of Evesham,[1] rose upon the site of his cell. Ethelbald built it in the midst of these stagnant waters, upon piles driven into a little heap of earth which was brought from a distance in boats, to solidify the marsh which the industry of the monks was soon to render wholesome, and transform into fertile meadows. Croyland was specially distinguished for the knowledge of its monks, and occupied for several centuries the first rank among English monasteries. The coffin of Guthlac, taken from the earth in which it was to have been buried, by the tenderness of Ethelbald, and richly decorated, formed the principal ornament of the great church, built in stone, which replaced the modest wooden oratory where Ethelbald and Guthlac had prayed together. This church, often destroyed, was always rebuilt with increased magnificence ; and its great bell, known as the largest and most harmonious in England, retained to its last day the name and recollection of the hermit whom its royal founder had so much loved.[2]

[1] See in vol. iv. p. 351, the foundation of this abbey by Bishop Egwin, and its consecration by Wilfrid.

[2] "Sarcophagum non humo terræ condidit, immo in memoriale quod nunc ab Ethelbaldo rege miris ornamentorum structuris . . . ædificatum

It would be pleasant to believe that Ethelbald showed himself always worthy of the tender sympathy with which his holy friend had honoured him in his youth. But this confidence is scarcely possible in presence of the famous and eloquent letter addressed to him by six English bishops, who were occupied during his whole reign in the work of evangelising Germany, and who had at their head the great Boniface. The holy apostle of the Germans went from England to the Continent the same year in which Ethelbald became king, and two years before the end of his reign he died the death of a martyr. The letter of the bishops informs us that the private conduct of the king awakened a religious and patriotic sorrow in those noble missionaries of Anglo-Saxon faith and glory. They accuse him, according to public report, of having sought in celibacy, not Christian mortification, but the satisfaction of his sensual instincts, and in the effervescence of his passions of respecting neither the domestic hearths of his fellow-citizens, nor even the sanctuaries of virgins consecrated to God.[1]

Continuation and end of the reign of Ethelbald in Mercia.

716-755.

conspicimus. . . . Quia palustris humus lapideam molem sustinere non poterat, ingentes ex quercis palos innumeræ multitudinis humo infigi fecit, duramque terram . . . scaphis deferri et paludibus commisceri . . . ad honorem Dei et sancti anachoretæ quem valde dilexerat, pro dulci consolatione quam eo dum exsulabat multoties perceperat."—*Vita*, c. 37, 41. Some remains of the abbey church of Croyland still exist, but these are of the church built in the twelfth or fourteenth century. In the tympanum of the portal, in the western front, five medallions in bas-relief represent the principal incidents in the life of Guthlac—his arrival in the marsh of Croyland in a boat, his first interview with Ethelbald, his death, &c.

[1] "Quando aliqua injuria de statu regni vestri, vel eventu bellorum

They remind him in this respect of the honour paid to chastity by their heathen ancestors, the Saxons of Germany, and the cruel penalties which were exacted for adultery. They entreat him not to dishonour his old age, not to encourage the English nation by his example to descend by debauchery to the level of the degenerate nations of Spain and the south of Europe, of whom the Saxons had already made a prey. They reproach him besides with having violated the charters and stolen the possessions of several monasteries, and with authorising the Mercian lords, by his example, to subject the monks and priests to violence and servitude, till then unknown in Christian England.[1]

On the other hand, these witnesses of imposing authority congratulate him highly on his charity to the poor, as well as on his zeal for the administration of justice, the protection of the weak, and the repression of local quarrels and disorders.

Other testimony informs us that he was a just, generous, and brave king; that, by his frequent and fortunate wars, the friend of Guthlac raised Mercia to a degree of power which it had never

facta, aut quod majus est, de salute animæ periculosum damnum perpetratum per auditum usque ad nos pervenerit, mœrore et tristitia cruciamur. . . . Qui nobis narrant, adjiciunt quod hoc scelus maxime cum sanctimonialibus et sacratis Deo virginibus per monasteria commissum sit. Audivimus præterea quod optimates pæne omnis gentis Merciorum tuo exemplo legitimas uxores deserant, et adulteras et sanctimoniales constuprent."—S. Bonifacii *Epistolæ*, 59, ed. Jaffé.

[1] "Et dicitur quod præfecti et comites tui majorem violentiam et servitutem monachis et sacerdotibus irrogent, quam cæteri ante Christiani reges fecissent."—*Ibid.*

before reached, and that he was regarded as the supreme monarch of England up to the day on which, after a long and prosperous reign, he fell fighting against the West Saxons, in a struggle, the picturesque and impassioned narrative of which has been enshrined by popular poetry amid the historic annals of the period.[1]

Three kings of the West Saxons abdicate to become monks or pilgrims to Rome.

The kingdom of the West Saxons, which was to inherit the power of the Mercians, as the latter had inherited that of the Northumbrians, was destined to absorb all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, and thus to create that English unity which no dismemberment has ever broken up. The dynasty of the sons of Cerdic, reputed by tradition to be himself the ninth in descent from the god Odin, was to produce Egbert and the great Alfred. It prefaced these generous lives by giving three kings, one after another, to the monastic order, which already owed to it the holy and learned Abbot Aldhelm. He who opened the march in a career which was so novel to the sons of Odin, was Centwin, son of the first Christian King of Wessex,[2] who, after a brilliant and warlike reign of nine years, interspersed with battles between the Mercians and Britons, determined to end his days in one of the monas-

Centwin. 676-685.

[1] HENRICUS HUNTINGDON, *Historia Anglorum*, l. iv. p. 341. The friend of Guthlac describes himself in a charter of 736, "Rex non solum Merciorum sed et omnium provinciarum quæ generali nomine Sut-Angli dicuntur;" and elsewhere, "Rex Britanniæ."

[2] Cynegils, converted and presented for baptism by his son-in-law, Oswald of Northumbria. See above, vol. iv. p. 99.

Ceadwalla. 685-689. teries which he had founded and endowed.[1] After him it was the turn of Ceadwalla, the ferocious devastator of the Isle of Wight, and the kingdoms of Kent and Sussex, who remained obstinately heathen, notwithstanding the conversion of his neighbours and his country, but who, all at once, at the age of thirty, recalling to his memory the instructions which he had received when himself in exile from the great exile Wilfrid,[2] abdicated his crown, crossed the sea, the Alps, and Lombardy, and appeared at Rome, the first of the Anglo-Saxon kings, as Wilfrid, thirty years before, had been the first monastic pilgrim of the same race who had visited

20th April 689. the Eternal City. He asked baptism from Pope Sergius, who conferred upon him the name of Peter, in memory of the great devotion which had brought him from so great a distance to the tomb of the prince of the apostles. Ten days later, before he had even laid aside the white robe of the catechumens, he died. The Pope gave orders that he

[1] His history is scarcely known to us, except through the verses of Aldhelm addressed to his daughter Bugga, who is perhaps the same as the abbess of that name to whom Boniface addressed several of his epistles :—

" Hoc templum Bugge pulchro molimine structum,
Nobilis erexit Centwini filia regis,
Qui prius imperium Saxonum rite regebat,
Donec præsentis contemnens culmina regni,
Divitias mundi rerumque reliquit habenas ;
Plurima basilicis impendens rura novellis
Quæ nunc christicolæ servant monastica jura. . . .
Exin sacratam perrexit quærere vitam,
Dum proprium linquit Christi pro nomine regnum. . . .
Donec conversus cellam migravit in almam."
—Ed. Giles, p. 117.

[2] See above, vol. iv. p. 285.

should be buried in St Peter's, and inscribed upon his tomb an epitaph in tolerable verse, intended to stir up the zeal of future generations by the example of the young and formidable victor, who had given up everything that he and his father had conquered or hoarded up, and abjured his barbarous religion to become the humble godson of St Peter, and who had gone clothed with the whiteness of baptism to increase in heaven the flock of Christ.[1]

Ina, King of Wessex, 688-725,

The crown of the West Saxons passed after him to Ina, the friend of St Aldhelm, as Ceadwalla had been the friend of Wilfrid. His long and prosperous reign laid the foundations of the future ascendancy of his race over all England. Though very warlike and very fortunate in war, the conqueror of the Southern and Eastern Saxons, he owes his fame specially to the code of laws which he gave to his people, and which has been preserved in its integrity, like the laws given a century before by Ethelbert of Kent, with the help of the Roman

Legislator,

[1] "Culmen, opes, sobolem, pollentia regna, triumphos,
Exuvias, proceres, mœnia, castra, lares:
Quæque patrum virtus, et quæ congesserat ipse,
Cædival armipotens, liquit amore Dei,
Ut Petrum sedemque Petri rex cerneret hospes. . . .
Barbaricam rabiem, nomen et inde suum
Conversus convertit ovans. . . .

Urbem Romuleam vidit, templumque verendum
Aspexit, Petri mystica dona gerens.
Candidus inter oves Christi sociabilis ibit:
Corpore nam tumulum, mente superna tenet:
Commutasse magis sceptrorum insignia credas,
Quem regnum Christi promeruisse vides."
—Apud Bede, v. 7.

missionaries.[1] Ina drew out his under the inspiration, and with the aid, of the two monk-bishops of Winchester and of London,[2] of his earls, and all the wise men (*witan*) who composed the parliament of his three kingdoms, and besides, according to his own declaration, with the help of many monks or servants of God, in order to provide for the salvation of souls and the prosperity of his people. Among these laws may be remarked some which guarantee the inviolability of marriage, and the sanctity of betrothal; consecrate the right of asylum in churches; improve the condition of the peasants, while maintaining their feudal thraldom to the soil of their lords; provide for the support of their widows and orphans; forbid the exportation of slaves, and declare free of all bondage the slave who should be compelled by his master to work on Sunday.[3]

Victor, and pacificator of the Britons,

He pursued with energy the struggle with the Britons of Wales, and finally succeeded in incorporating into his kingdom those of Cornwall,

[1] *Dooms of Ina*, ap. THORPE, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, p. 45.

[2] Hedda, the friend and predecessor of Aldhelm and Erconwald.

[3] "Ego Ine Dei gratia West-Saxonum rex, exhortatione et doctrina. . . . Heddæ episcopi mei . . . et omnium Aldermannorum meorum et seniorum et sapientum regni mei, multaque congregatione servorum Dei, sollicitus de salute animarum nostrarum et de statu regni mei, constitui rectum conjugium et justa judicia pro stabilitate et confirmatione populi mei benigna sedulitate celebrari. . . . Si servus operetur dominica die per præceptum domini sui, sit liber: si liber operetur illa die sine jussu domini sui, perdat libertatem suam."—Latin text in the Chronicle of John of Brompton, ap. TWYSDEN, *Script. Ang.*, i. 761.

dethroning the king of that province, to whom Aldhelm had addressed his famous letter upon the Celtic Easter.[1] But Ina, who was himself born of a Celtic mother, consulting at once the precepts of Christian morality and the well-understood interests of his nation, completed the pacification of the conquered population by guaranteeing the validity of marriages contracted between Saxons and Britons, and entered into relations with the Celts of Armorica.[2] He rebuilt and endowed magnificently the national sanctuary of the Britons at Glastonbury,[3] consecrating to this work of conciliation the thirty thousand pounds of silver which he had torn, sword in hand, from the Jutes of Kent, on account of *were*, or compensation for the life of a West Saxon prince whom they had burned alive.[4] He thus testified the veneration of the Saxon conquerors for the celebrated monastery which, after having been the cradle of Celtic Christianity,[5] and the tomb of King Arthur, was about to become one of the principal centres of Anglo-Saxon monachism, and one of the burying-places of English royalty. It is the sole example in Great Britain of a religious

[1] See above, p. 49.

[2] Judicial tradition noticed by LAPPENBERG, p. 258.

[3] See vol. iii. p. 25. Henschen, the learned and conscientious Bollandist, after having quoted two apocryphal charters of Ina in favour of Glastonbury, in vol. i. of February, p. 907, 908, has acknowledged and proclaimed the falsehood of the articles in vol. ii. of April, p. 31. He adds modestly: "Si eadem, quæ nunc Aprilem absolventibus, adfuisset scientia Februarium tractantibus, explodi ista potuissent."

[4] *Chron. Anglo-Sax.*, ad. ann. 687 and 694. LINGARD, *History*, p. 161.

[5] See vol. iii. p. 27 and 53.

foundation which has become equally dear and sacred to the two races—to the victors as to the vanquished.

With the help of the princes and patricians of his own country, Ina founded or enriched many other monasteries,[1] being specially guided in his good works by the most illustrious abbot in Wessex, his friend and cousin Aldhelm, whom he had drawn from the cloister of Malmesbury to make him a bishop, and whose counsels he followed with affectionate docility.[2]

The first protector of Boniface.

And, finally, thanks to Ina, at the moment when Aldhelm disappeared from the scene, one of the most illustrious of the saints whom England has given to the Church rises on our sight, the great Winefred, whose youth was spent in a monastery in Wessex, from which Ina took him to intrust him with certain delicate negotiations with the Archbishop of Canterbury.[3] This is the first appearance in history of him who was to be the victor over Teutonic heathenism, the true Christian conqueror of Germany, and whose name, latinised into Boniface, is inscribed in ineffaceable

[1] See details on the part he took in the foundation of Abingdon, given in the *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, c. 12, 13, newly published by J. Stevens in the *Rerum Britannic. Scriptores*. In an assembly held in 704, he confirmed the monasteries of Wessex in their charters and possessions by a deed signed by all the *principes, senatores, judices, et patricii*. —KEMBLE, *Cod. Diplomat.*, n. 50 and 51.

[2] "Adfuit pater Aldhelmus cujus ille præcepta audiebat humiliter, suscipiebat granditer, adimplebat hilariter."—*De Regib.*, lib. i. c. 2.

[3] S. WILLEBALDI *Vita S. Bonifacii*, c. 4.

characters in history along with those of Charles Martel and of Charlemagne.

While Ina was still in full possession of his power and popularity,[1] after thirty-seven years of a prosperous and glorious reign, his wife, Ethelburga, in whose veins, as in his own, ran the warlike blood of Cerdic, and who had shared all the cares of his life even to the point of victoriously leading his people to battle in his absence, persuaded him to give up his throne and the world. According to narratives which unfortunately are not given us by contemporaries, but which are in conformity with the characteristic conditions of Anglo-Saxon nature, the queen's device for deciding Ina to the sacrifice which she meant to make along with him, was after the following fashion :—A great banquet, accompanied by all the refinements of lordly luxury in these days, had been given in one of the royal *villas*. Next morning the princely pair set out on their journey, but after riding for an hour or two, the queen begged her husband to return whence they came. He consented, and on returning to the castle, he was struck with consternation to find the scene of the recent rejoicings not only silent and desert, but destroyed and desecrated. It was covered with ruins and filth, and the very bed on which they had slept was occupied by a sow with her litter. The astonished king looked at the

[1] "Sine alto insidiarum metu securus incanuit, sanctissimus amoris publici lenocinator."—GUILL. MALMESB., *l. c.*

queen, who had given secret orders to this effect to the steward of the villa, for an explanation. "Yes, my lord husband," said Ethelburga, "where are now our yesterday's pleasures? where are our purple hangings, our gay parasites, our heavy silver dishes and delicate meats? All has passed away like smoke, and those who prize such pleasures shall pass away like them. Behold, then, I pray you, into what misery falls this flesh which we feed so delicately; and we who are fed still more daintily than other men, shall not we fall into a still more miserable corruption?"[1]

Ina abdicates, and dies in obscurity at Rome. 726-728.

This was enough, according to the legend, to determine the king to think only for the future of his soul. Authentic history proves his abdication, which was given in the midst of a Parliament of Witan, to whom he announced his resolution to pass the rest of his days in penitence.[2] Then, accompanied by Ethelburga, he went to Rome. He arrived there after a long and painful journey, to end his life in penitence and obscurity. According to some accounts, he embraced monastic life according to the rule of St Benedict;[3] according to others, he preferred, for humility's sake, to

[1] "Villicus ex reginæ conscientia . . . in lecto ubi cubuerant porcam noviter enixam collocat . . . Regis oculi ad mulierem rediere. Et ubi sunt, ait, domine conjux, hesterni strepitus? . . . Nonne nos qui ingurgitamur uberius, putrescemus miserius? . . . Maritum compulit in sententiam exemplo, quam multis annis frustra insusurraverat verbo."—GUILL. MALMESB., *l. c.*

[2] LINGARD, i. 162.

[3] *Act. SS. Bolland.*, t. i. Febr., p. 913. MABILLON, *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, t. iii. p. 465.

remain lost in the crowds of poor pilgrims, with neither tonsure nor cowl, gaining his livelihood by the work of his hands.[1]

Upon the left bank of the Tiber, then almost desert, and not far from the Vatican, the lawgiver and king founded, under the name of *Schola Saxonum*, an establishment for the orthodox education of young princes, and for the priests and clerks of his country who desired to complete their religious and literary education in the shadow of the basilica of St Peter.[2] He added to this a church and burying-ground specially intended for his countrymen, and in which he was himself buried, for he died in Rome in the obscurity he had voluntarily sought. His faithful Ethelburga remained with him till his death, and then returning, became a nun in England.

The great Benedictine Wilfrid had set the example of these pilgrimages to Rome, which nobody had thought of before his time.[3] Some years after

[1] GUILL. MALMESB., *l. c.* "Dux fœmina facti," adds the monastic historian, steeped, like all his fellows, in the recollections of classical antiquity.

[2] It was transformed by Innocent III. into an hospital, which has become, under the title of *S. Spirito in vico de Sassia*, the most celebrated in Rome. Other traditions attribute this important foundation to young Offa of Essex, who also died a monk at Rome (RICHARD DE CIRENCESTER, p. 229, ed. Mayor), or, again, to the powerful Offa, King of Mercia, who died in 796, and will be referred to further on. In any case, the latter was a great benefactor of the national foundation in Rome, the doors of which he opened to students of all countries. "Ut ibidem peregrini . . . ex diversis mundi partibus barbari . . . linguas quas non noverint, addiscerent."—MATTH. PARIS, *in Vitis Abbatum S. Albani*, c. 1.

[3] See vol. iv. p. 136.

Crowd of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims to Rome.

his death it became a kind of epidemic. During the seventh and eighth centuries Rome was the meeting-place of innumerable pilgrims, who came from all quarters of the West to see the holy city, and pray by the tombs of the saints and martyrs. By no nation was this pious duty accomplished with greater zeal and fervour than by the Anglo-Saxons. Their kings set them the example,[1] differing in that point from the Merovingians, not a single individual of whom ever crossed the Alps to go to Rome.

An irresistible attraction to the Eternal City soon became apparent among Saxons of all ranks: princes and bishops, rich and poor, priests and laity, men and women, undertook the pilgrimage with eagerness, often going so far as to repeat the journey notwithstanding its difficulties and dangers.[2] They were so numerous that, collecting round the foundation of King Ina, they gave their name to an entire quarter of the city, the *Vicus Saxonum*,[3] situated in the immediate neighbourhood of St Peter's, and inhabited exclusively by them. They came, says their historian, to make acquaintance in their lifetime with the saints, by whom they hoped to be well received in heaven.

[1] Lingard counts as many as eight kings, including, however, Ethelwulf and Canute, who belong to a later period.—*Antiquities*, i. 116.

[2] "Cupiens in vicinia sanctorum locorum ad tempus peregrinari in erris, quo familiarius a sanctis recipi mereretur in cœlis; quod his temporibus plures de gente Anglorum, nobiles, ignobiles, laici, clerici, viri ac feminæ certatim facere consuerunt."—BEDE, v. 7.

[3] From whence comes the name *Sassia*, still preserved in this part of Rome.

But as there were false monks who introduced even into the cloister the indolence and vices of worldly life, so there were also false pilgrims whom frivolous or guilty motives carried abroad; and the monastic writers have remarked the one as well as the other. The wandering inclination of the Teutonic races may well have contributed, after the first impulse of fervent and sincere piety, to increase the number of those undevout pilgrims who often scandalised by their conduct the Christian countries through which they travelled. Women especially, and even virgins consecrated to God, excited the just indignation of the priests and the faithful in France and Italy, by their licence and lamentable downfalls, during their journeys to Rome. The melancholy revelations transmitted by the great apostle of Germany on this point to his colleague and countryman, Bishop Cuthbert of Canterbury, which led the latter to request the English assemblies and princes to forbid absolutely the pilgrimages of women and nuns to Rome, will not bear repetition.[1]

Their disorderly behaviour.

I shall have succeeded poorly in expounding the history of these times, and ill served the truth, if

[1] "Aliquod levamentum turpitudinis esset, si prohiberent synodus et principes vestri mulieribus et velatis feminis illud iter et frequentiam, quam ad Romanam civitatem veniendo et redeundo faciunt; quia magna ex parte pereunt, paucis remanentibus integris. Perpaucæ enim sunt civitates in Longobardia, vel in Francia, vel in Gallia, in qua non sit adultera vel meretrix generis Anglorum: quod scandalum est et turpitudo totius Ecclesiæ."—S. Bonifacii *Epist. ad Cuthbertum archiepiscopum.*

the reader has not been struck by the singular mixture of good and evil, peace and war, freedom and slavery, which, from the beginning of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, shows itself in all the relations between society and the Church. It is evident that goodness had the advantage over evil, but that the evil was formidable, the dangers continual and flagrant, the deceivers and ill-doers more numerous than the saints. This, notwithstanding, has been called the *Golden Age* of religion in England; not without reason, if the name has been given by comparison with later periods, but wrongly if attributed solely to its real merits. The fact is, that in true history there is no golden age. All ages, without exception, are infected by the evil which proceeds from man's natural corruption. All bear witness to his incurable weakness, but at the same time all proclaim his greatness and freedom, as well as the justice and mercy of God, his Maker and Redeemer.

# BOOK XIV.

## SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF THE MONKS AMONG THE ANGLO-SAXONS.

" Record we too, with just and faithful pen,
That many hooded cenobites there are,
Who in their private cells have yet a care
Of public quiet; unambitious Men,
Counsellors for the world, of piercing ken;
Whose fervent exhortations from afar
Move Princes to their duty, peace or war;
And oft-times in the most forbidding den
Of solitude, with love of science strong,
How patiently the yoke of thought they bear. . . .
By such examples moved to unbought pains
The people work like congregated bees;
Eager to build the quiet fortresses,
Where piety, as they believe, obtains
From heaven a general blessing; timely rains
And sunshine; prosperous enterprise, and peace and equity."

WORDSWORTH.

# BOOK XIV.

The conversion and religious organisation of England entirely the work of monks.—Their patience and perseverance; letter of Bishop Daniel to the missionary Boniface; no violence; mildness and toleration.—Their influence over the nature they had converted; evil survives, but the good outweighs it.—Alliance between the Church and secular society, without the exclusive preponderance of either.—These apostolic monks were no longer fathers of the desert, but the creators of a Church and nation.—Towns grow up around the great communities.—The monasteries give rise to cathedrals and parishes.—Propagation of the Benedictine order.—Protection assured to the monastic order by the Councils of Beccancelde and Cloveshove.—Religious instruction in the national tongue.—Musical liturgy.—Crosses in the open air.—Services rendered to education by monasteries and monastic bishops.—St John of Beverley.—Fondness of the Anglo-Saxon students for horsemanship.—Services rendered to agriculture.—Position of the monks as landlords.—Close alliance between the monastic order and the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy.—Intervention in political matters.—Their place in the national councils.—Authority, composition, and powers of these councils.—The distinction between the temporal and spiritual is not forgotten.—Influence of monks in these assemblies, and through them on laws and manners.—They contribute to the formation of that national unity which, since the ninth century, has never been disturbed.—Their devotion to the cause of the poor; expiation for the sins of the rich gives rise to public almsgiving.—Their zeal for the liberation of slaves; contest between an archbishop and an abbot for a young captive.—The rights of man as well as those of God vindicated by the monks throughout the history of their conquest of England.—Religion is too often left defenceless, but her ministers respect honour and the freedom of thought in regard to the things of God.—The monastic missionaries perfect the national character without changing it; the spirit of the Saxons still lives in modern England; modern liberty, self-government, and parliamentary rule are rooted in the Saxon times.—Conformity of monastic rules with the tone of Anglo-Saxon institutions.—Splendour and prodigality of the

aristocracy.—Motives of their gifts.—Abuse of their grants of land.—*Folc-land* and *boc-land*.—Monastic possessions exempt from military service and from taxes.—Public danger remarked by Bede.—Repression of many abuses by the Council of Cloveshove; it decrees against monastic luxury and wealth, and against the false ideas prevalent as to almsgiving.—The monastic riches arising from the munificence of kings and nobles soon excite envy; fluctuations and oppressions noticed by St Boniface; necessity of a limit which might be imposed by the Church herself on the increase of monastic possessions.—Their value forms a pretext for spoliation and heresy.—Lacordaire and Mabillon.—A Spanish Benedictine martyred in 1608.—Before reaching this point England becomes the home of Christian propagandism and the instructress of the Teutonic races.—At the death of Bede Boniface is already the apostle of Germany.

## I.

597. A CENTURY and a half passed between the establishment of St Augustin at Canterbury and the
735. final erection of a second metropolitan see at York —between the first written laws of the first Christian king of Kent, and those decrees of the Council
747. of Cloveshove which established a sort of confederation among the Anglo-Saxon bishops, and at the same time sanctioned and made general[1] the parochial system, which is still the foundation of temporal and spiritual life in the country districts of England.[2]

[1] "Ut una fit omnium concordia . . . in sermone, in opere, in judicio, sine cujusquam adulatione personæ. . . . Ut licet sedibus sint divisi per diversa loca, tamen mentibus conjuncti in uno spiritu Deo deserviant."—Cap. 2. For all the details of this famous council, which was held in the presence of the Mercian king Ethelbald, the friend of the holy monk Guthlac, see the excellent narrative of Lingard, *Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 124, and Note G.

[2] Cap. 9, 10, 14. Cf. LE PLAY, *La Réforme Sociale déduite de l'Observation Comparée des Peuples Européens*, t. ii. ch. 7, § 55.

During this interval all the inhabitants of Great Britain had become Christian; and all Britons and Saxons had acknowledged the supremacy of the Holy See, substituting everywhere the observances of Rome in place of the ancient customs of Celtic Christianity.

The conversion and religious organisation of England accomplished solely by monks.

This great victory was the exclusive work of the monks.

With no human aid—with at the most the protecting sympathy of a woman[1] to help them—they entered all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, one by one, as missionaries, and remained there as bishops, as pastors, as permanent preachers. Little by little they thus conquered the British soil, and covered it with their establishments. Their work had been slow and difficult. Stormy incidents and melancholy changes had not been wanting in it. Sons did not always allow themselves to be led by the example of their fathers, nor nations by that of their neighbours. Let us recall the first defection of the Jutes in Kent immediately after the death of Ethelbert, the double apostasy of the Saxons of the East, the rage of the old British Christians against the Teutonic converts, the destruction by fire and sword of the new-born Christianity in Northumbria, the horrible ravages of the heathen Penda among all his Christian neighbours!

[1] Bertha the Merovingian in Kent; her daughter Ethelburga in Northumbria; the heathen bride of the holy King Oswald in Wessex; and the Christian bride of the son of Penda in Mercia.

All these difficulties and trials they met only with an unconquerable perseverance and gentleness. A hundred and fifty years after the arrival of Augustin, a holy abbot, friend of St Aldhelm, and, like him, trained at Malmesbury, revealed the secret of their power to his illustrious countryman St Boniface, who was then occupied in carrying the light of the Gospel from England to Germany. "To overcome," he said, "the obstinacy of heathen savages—to fertilise the stony and barren soil of their hearts—pains must be taken not to insult or irritate them, but to set our doctrines before them with unfailing moderation and gentleness, so as to make them blush at their foolish superstitions without exasperating them."[1]

To effect this conquest they used only the arms of patience and toleration.

Thus armed the monks finally triumphed everywhere; and everywhere, with the free consent of the people, proved by the public deliberations of the national assemblies of each kingdom, where each had the freedom of giving an answer in his turn.[2] Let us repeat, to the immortal glory of the monastic conquerors of England, that neither they, their disciples, nor their protectors, used violence or persecution for the aid of evangelical truth.[3] The faith as preached by the monks was nowhere

[1] "Non quasi insultando vel irritando eos, sed placide ac magna objicere moderatione debes."—*Epist.* 15 *inter Bonifacianas*, ed. Jaffé.

[2] "Habito cum sapientibus consilio, sciscitabatur singillatim ab omnibus, qualis sibi doctrina hæc . . . videretur. . . . Cæteri majores natu ac regis consiliarii."—BEDE, ii. 13.

[3] We have quoted the only exception to this rule in Sussex, p. 281 of vol. iv.

enforced by a master; nowhere was it admitted without examination and discussion; nowhere was it propagated or defended among our insular Saxons by the sanguinary means used by Charlemange among the Saxons on the other side of the Rhine.

At a later period, it is true, in conformity with the general spirit of Christian nations, and in proportion as the ties between religion and society became closer, penal legislation often transformed itself into a helper of Christian morality and ecclesiastical discipline. The assemblies in which bishops and abbots had a place beside kings and landowners, often decreed severe or shameful penalties for apostasy,[1] for the violation of Sunday rest or the fasts of Lent,[2] and especially for drunkenness and incontinence, which were the most common vices among the Anglo-Saxons. But these penalties never went the length of torture or bloodshed, as often happened where the Byzantine laws had infected Catholic nations with its poison. Up to the present moment, thanks to God, in these distant centuries, in the midst of gross immorality, beside scandals which we have not attempted to conceal or deny, we have not met with one single bloody or cruel act which can be attributed to

[1] The most severe penalty pronounced against apostasy was that of *healsfang*, which interpreters translate as stocks or pillory—a penalty, however, which might be evaded by the contributions of friends.—THORPE, i. 45; LINGARD, i. 112.

[2] BEDE, iii. 8.

any Anglo-Saxon bishop, priest, or monk. Faithful to the precepts and example of their first and glorious master St Gregory the Great, they gained hearts and governed souls by the irresistible might of kindness; and though not above the reach of human infirmity, remained long strangers and superior to the bitterness, covetousness, and violence which are too often to be met with in the history of the Church, and which she has always had to pay for by a loss of souls.

Such apostles found neophytes worthy of them. "No nation," says with justice Edmund Burke, the most illustrious of their descendants, "has embraced Christianity with more fervour and simplicity than the Anglo-Saxons."[1] The permanent and generous struggle, which shows itself everywhere from the moment of their conversion, between their new principles and their old instincts, their savage traditions of murder, vengeance, and debauchery, demonstrate at once the sincerity of their faith and the merit of their submission. For a long time they alternate between atrocious crimes and unbounded penances, between audacious rapine and a giving up of all earthly goods, between odious outrages upon modesty and vows of perpetual chastity. They were capable of every sin to satisfy their passions, and were not less capable of every sacrifice to expiate their excesses. But in the long-run, and sometimes very speedily, goodness

[1] BURKE, *Essay towards an Abridgment of English History*, c. iii.

carried the day, and, except for some terrible backslidings which were inevitable, remained master of the field, thanks to the generous and unwearied efforts of the monastic apostles. Wherever the hand, the words, the spirit of the monk, bishop, or missionary can reach, a uniform tendency is evident, both in morals and laws, in word and deed, towards justice, humanity, the love of goodness, and neighbourly charity; subduing the native fierceness of their countrymen; struggling against the most popular vices and excesses; introducing intellectual culture; creating and maintaining social peace from religious motives. The great mission which devolved upon the Church after the ruin of the Empire, that of restraining and ennobling the barbarians, of purifying and transforming their souls, was never more completely fulfilled.

And perhaps also the alliance between the two societies temporal and spiritual, between Church and State, was never more completely and happily realised. It was the climax of this union, at least in England, a moment which had its stains and miseries like everything here below, but which was free on both sides from permanent and systematic excesses. No king of the period attempted to govern or use the Church for his own advantage; no pontiff, in these exclusively monastic times, claimed that deceitful ascendancy which precedes or produces decadence and rebellion.

Certainly the Anglo-Saxon monks, instruments of

They were not Fathers of the desert, but makers of a church and nation.

a revolution so fruitful, and creators of an organisation so brilliant and lasting, had nothing, except their name, their celibate condition, their faith in Jesus Christ and His Church, in common with the Fathers of the desert, or even with the rare and austere companions of St Benedict. Far from flying the company of other Christians, they impersonated or created Christian society around them. Far from thinking of their own salvation alone, they laboured without intermission, first for the salvation of infidels, and afterwards for the maintenance of faith and morality in the new Christian communities formed by their instructions. Far from confining themselves to prayer or manual labour, they cultivated and extended with enthusiasm all the knowledge and literature possessed by the world in their days. The distant places to which they had been first led by a love of solitude changed rapidly, and as if by force of circumstances, into cathedrals, cities, towns, or rural colonies, and served as centres, schools, libraries, workshops, and citadels to the scarcely converted families, parties, and tribes. Around the monastic cathedrals and the principal communities, towns which are still in existence formed rapidly, and municipal liberties soon dawned into life among them, the vital guarantees of which still exist along with the very names of the magistrates charged with their defence and maintenance.[1]

All the bishops of the Heptarchy, as our narrative

[1] KEMBLE, vol. ii. p. 330, 338.

must have proved, issued from monasteries; the clergy of the cathedrals were exclusively monks who lived in community with their diocesan prelate at their head. For a century at least they held the place of the secular or parochial clergy. The monasteries were centres from which missionaries went forth to the rural stations to baptise, preach, and celebrate all the ceremonies of worship, and into which they returned to revive themselves by study and prayer. Rural parishes were formed but slowly under the influence of Archbishop Theodore in the south, and of Archbishop Egbert and Bede in the north. The monasteries thus long supplied in Christian England the place not only of cathedrals but of parish churches. Most of the cathedrals preserved their monastic character until long after the Norman Conquest. The decrees of the council of Cloveshove, in 747, are the first authentic documents which treat as a general fact the distribution of lay lands into districts administered by priests under the control of bishops, in distinction from churches situated in the lands belonging to the monasteries and served by priests under the control of their abbots. The latter churches, in which the priest was always assisted by a deacon and several clerks, were sometimes called *monasteriuncula*.

The monasteries answer the purpose of cathedrals or parishes.

670.

730.

When parishes were thus organised, most of the priests placed at the head of the new divisions of the country were naturally brought from the monas-

teries.[1] All was to make or to make anew in that great work, for it must be repeated that every trace of ancient British Christianity had disappeared before the Saxons. Except at Glastonbury, which had been at all times one of the great centres of Celtic devotion,[2] in the little Roman church at Canterbury, where Queen Bertha was wont to pray,[3] and at Evesham where the ruins of a little British church were found in the thicket which had to be cleared away for the foundation of the new abbey,[4] no vestige of the Christianity of the Britons or Romans is to be found in the history of the conquest of England by the monks.

Extension of the Benedictine order.

This extension of their office and influence had not been attained in any other Christian nation; but it did not banish from the mind of the Anglo-Saxon monks the necessity of maintaining and guaranteeing the fundamental conditions of their institution. The rule of St Benedict, which had been brought into England along with the Gospel by the first envoys of the Benedictine pope, St Gregory the Great, had followed step by step the progress of evangelisation and Roman supremacy, and finally supplanted all the monastic regulations of Celtic countries or times. From Wilfrid to Bede, all the popular saints, Cuthbert, Egwin,

[1] Lingard (*Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. i. p. 457) perfectly explains all that concerns the organisation of the parochial clergy. See what has been said above, vol. iv. p. 209.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 26. [3] See vol. iii. p. 346.

[4] See vol. iv. p. 351.

Benedict Biscop, Botulph, and Aldhelm, distinguished themselves by their zeal for the Benedictine rule, although giving to it slight modifications and additions such as suited the country and age. There existed, however, no hierarchical connection among the different monasteries, no chapter general, and, except the tie formed by Wilfrid between the nine or ten houses founded by himself,[1] no general congregation of different communities, such as has been so general since. The only link between the continually increasing monasteries which covered the British soil was in the code, already a thing of antiquity, which had come from Rome with the Christian faith, and which the second council of Cloveshove names simply *the Rule*, as if it had become the sole rule recognised and put in practice.[2]

The monastic order guaranteed by the councils

Most of the councils held in England from the end of the seventh century gave a place to monastic interests in their decrees which was in keeping with the preponderance of monastic prelates in the assemblies where these decrees were discussed or promulgated. Let us note the council of Beccancelde,[3] called, in 694, by Withred, King of Kent, the fifth descendant of Ethelbert, which was presided over by Archbishop Brithwald, and at which the learned Grecian, Tobie, Bishop of Rochester,

Of Beccancelde, 694;

[1] See vol. iv. p. 362.

[2] Cap. 24. Cf. MABILLON, præf. in 1 sæcul., § 87.

[3] This is supposed to be Beckenham, or, according to Hook, Bapchild, near Sittingbourne.

many abbots, priests, lords, and *five abbesses*, were present.[1]

The king summed up the deliberations of the assembly. "I desire," said he, "that the monasteries and churches which have been given or bequeathed for the glory of God, in the time of the faithful kings, my relatives and predecessors, may remain dedicated to Him for ever. I, Withred, earthly king, moved by the celestial King, and inspired by the love of justice, have learned from our ancestors that no layman has a right to take possession of any church whatsoever, nor of anything that belongs to that church. For this reason we interdict all kings, our successors, all eorls, or other laymen, from exercising authority over churches or their possessions which I and my predecessors have given as a perpetual inheritance to Christ, to the Holy Virgin, and to the apostles. When an abbot or abbess dies, let notice be given to the archbishop, and let his successor be chosen only after the purity of his life has been acknowledged by the bishop. It is the king's duty to choose the eorls and ealdormen, the sheriffs and judges; but it is the office of the archbishop to rule the Church of God, to elect and constitute bishops, abbots, abbesses, priests, and deacons, and to confirm them by his good example."[2]

[1] "Cæteris abbatibus, abbatissis, presbyteris, diaconibus, ducibus, satrapis, in unum glomeratis; pariter tractantes, anxie examinantes de statu ecclesiarum Dei vel monasteriorum intra Cantiam."—*Procem. ms. Cantuar.*, ap. COLETTI *Concil.*, vol. viii. p. 77. We will speak of these abbesses further on.

[2] "Volo ut omnes monasteria et ecclesiæ quæ fuerint datæ et legatæ

Another decree of the same council exempts the monasteries of Kent from all secular bondage, and notably from maintaining the king and lords during their journeys, which is an evidence that monastic hospitality, always so generous and spontaneous, had been cruelly abused by the greed and rapacity of powerful laymen.[1] Three years after, in a new assembly held at Berkhampstead, presided over by the same king and archbishop, and entitled a council, though many warriors occupied seats in it along with the clergy, the freedom of the Church was again guaranteed along with that of its jurisdiction, its property, and its prayers.[2] The decrees of these councils held in the kingdom of Kent, under the presidency of the metropolitan,

Of Berkhampstead, 697;

Dei in gloriam, regum fidelium meorum prædecessorum diebus . . . ita supersint Dei in honorem et firmiter remaneant in sæcula sæculorum. Cum ego Wihtredus, terrestris rex, a cœlesti Rege incitatus et spiritu justitiæ accensus, a nostris avis illud didicerim quod nullus laicus jure debet seipsum immittere in quamvis ecclesiam."—*Chron. Saxon.*, ed. Gibson, p. 48. Neither Bede nor Malmesbury mentions this council. Spelman, however, has found its decrees in five different MSS. The double report of these decrees given after his account in Coletti, vol. viii. p. 77, is much longer than that of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, but contains no essential addition.

[1] "Ex hac die donamus ecclesiis regni nostri liberas esse perpetua libertate ab omnibus difficultatibus secularis servitutis, a pastu regis, principum, comitum . . . ab omni debito vel pulsione regalium tributorum, ut possint, pro nobis Deo omnipotenti hostias dignas offerre, nostraque peccata abluere immaculatis muneribus . . . nisi sua spontanea voluntate, ex largitate beneficiorum quid facere velint."—*Concilia*, vol. viii. p. 78, 80.

[2] "Libera sit ecclesia, fruaturque suis judiciis, et redditibus seu pensionibus. Pro rege preces fiant, mandatisque ejus, non cogente necessitate, sed ex sponte obediunto."—*Concil.*, vol. viii. p. 99. This Latin is a much more recent translation of the Saxon text of the twenty-eight articles intituled *Judicia* (Dooms) of Withred.

And of Cloves-hove, 742.

were soon adopted over all England. They were solemnly confirmed at the first council of Cloveshove in 742 by Ethelbald, King of the Mercians, who was then the most powerful prince of the Heptarchy, and who, from his youthful friendship with the hermit Guthlac, had always been well disposed towards the monks.[1] It was at the same time decided that the exemption from all contributions to the public treasury granted to the monks did not extend to the taxes levied for the three principal necessities of the time (*trinoda necessitas*), the preservation of roads and bridges (*brycgbote*), of national fortresses (*burghbote*), and of military expeditions (*fyrd*).

The second council of Cloveshove—which was the most important of the Anglo-Saxon assemblies of the eighth century,[2] and was called in consequence of a celebrated letter from St Boniface to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and specially because of the severe orders of Pope Zacharius—added new guarantees and also new obligations to the already important mission of the monks, taking effectual measures against the abuses and oppressions which

[1] "Studiose requirentes qualiter in primordio nascentis ecclesiæ hic in Anglia jubebatur haberi honor cœnobiorum secundum normam æquitatis . . . tandem pervenit ad manus libertas ecclesiarum et institutio Withredi regis de electione et auctoritate cœnobiorum in regno Cantiæ."—*Concil.*, vol. viii. p. 267. Cloveshove or *Cliff'shoo*, where these famous councils were held, is placed by the best authorities at Cliff, near Rochester, in the part of Kent between the Thames and Medway. Others suppose that these councils were held at Abingdon or Tewkesbury, which was then one of the great abbeys of Gloucestershire.

[2] See above, p. 140, note 1.

had been pointed out almost at the same moment by Boniface in his letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and by Bede to the Archbishop of York.

## II.

Religious instruction in the national language.

It is then to the monks scattered as missionaries and preachers over the country, or united in the numerous communities of episcopal cities and other great monastic centres, that must be in justice attributed the initiation of the Anglo-Saxons into the truths of religion as well as into the consoling and readily-adopted observances of Catholic worship. They were expressly commanded to teach and explain to their flocks, in the vernacular tongue, the Decalogue, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the sacred words which were used in the celebration of mass and the administration of baptism; to expound to them every Sunday, in English, the epistle and gospel of the day, and to preach, or, instead of preaching, to read them something useful to their souls.[1]

The zeal of the Anglo-Saxon kings[2] and people for religious instruction in their own language

[1] "Ut symbolum fidei ac dominicam orationem, sed et sacrosancta quoque verba quæ in missæ celebratione et officio baptismi solemniter dicuntur, interpretari atque exponere posse propria lingua qui nesciant, discant."—*Concil. Clovesh.*, can. 16. Cf. THORPE, *op. cit.*, p. 159, and LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 167.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 101.

has been already pointed out. From this spring those homilies in Anglo-Saxon which are so often to be met with among the manuscripts in our libraries, and which are by several centuries of an earlier date than the earliest religious documents of any other modern language. Thence also came those translations of Holy Scripture which abounded in the cloisters from the seventh century, and which probably were circulated outside their boundaries,—translations ascribed by certain historians to the pens of the most illustrious monks—to Aldhelm and the venerable Bede, who are said to have completely translated, the one the Psalter, and the other the Old and New Testaments.[1]

The Sunday rest, still more scrupulously observed in England than in any other Christian country, was, from the beginning of the monastic mission, the object of special precautions. The Penitentiary of Theodore records the most minute regulations for preserving labourers, vine-dressers, and gardeners, as well as needlewomen, spinners, and washerwomen, from any infringement of that essential guarantee of freedom for both body and soul.[2]

[1] LAPPENBERG, vol. i. p. 197.

[2] "Nec viri ruralia opera exerceant, nec in vinea colenda, nec in campos arando, metendo, vel fœnum secando, vel sæpem ponendo. . . . Nec in horto laborent, nec ad placita conveniant, nec venationes exerceant. Item feminæ opera textilia non faciant, nec abluant vestimenta, nec consuant, nec lanam carpere, nec linum batere (*sic*), nec vestimenta lavare, nec verveces tondere. . . . Et ad missarum solemnia ad ecclesias undique conveniant, et laudent Deum pro omnibus bonis, quæ nobis in illa die fecit."—C. 38, § 8.

The solemn beauty of the worship celebrated in the monastic churches was increased by the liturgical uniformity in accordance with Roman rites which had been everywhere substituted for the Celtic, and were formally decreed by the council of Cloveshove.[1] And it must have had a still greater effect upon the people, from the gradual introduction of organs, the powerful melody of which our Aldhelm had already celebrated.[2] The first mention of them in England is connected with the abbey of Malmesbury, which, being situated not far from Cambria, and founded by a Celt, might offer a new attraction by means of that touching and majestic harmony to the essentially musical Welsh.[3]

The cross planted throughout the country.

In addition to the ceremonies celebrated within the churches, which were still too distant from each other to provide for all spiritual necessities, the solicitude of the monastic missionaries had extended the worship of the cross, for the instruction and consolation of the uncultured country people. The mysterious symbol of the redemption of the human race by the sufferings of the Son of God

[1] "Ut eamdem monasterialis psalmodiæ puritatem ubique sectentur, nihilque quod communis usus non admittit, præsumant cantare aut legere, sed tantum quod ex sacrarum scripturarum auctoritate descendit, et quod Romanæ Ecclesiæ consuetudo permittit."—*Can.* 15.

[2] "Maxima millenis auscultans organa flabris,
Mulceat auditum ventosis follibus iste,
Quamlibet auratis fulgescant cætera capsis."
—*De Laudibus Virginum*, ed. Giles, p. 138.

[3] Cf. LAPPENBERG, i. 198.

was raised from point to point on the hillsides and in the valleys of England now ransomed from the heathen yoke. The crucifix which St Augustin had presented for the first time to Ethelbert, on the morning after he landed on the banks of the Thâmes, and which the holy and pious Oswald had planted for the first time as a sign of hope and deliverance upon the soil of Northumbria on the eve of his first battle, stood in the place of an oratory and sanctuary in many districts scarcely yet cleared from the forest. A cross raised in the middle of a field was enough to satisfy the devotions of the thane, his ploughmen, and shepherds. They gathered around it for public and daily prayer,[1] and were inspired by it with a veneration not less affectionate than that which attached to the sanctuaries, daily increasing in number, which were almost all dedicated to the mother of Christ or St Peter; for the prince of the apostles was then the saint most universally and frequently invoked by the Christians of England.[2]

Services rendered to public instruction by the monasteries,

The unrivalled benefit of the faith was not the only service which the Benedictines lavished on converted England. It is at the risk of falling into repetition and commonplace that we dwell upon

[1] "Sic mos est Saxonicæ gentis, quod in nonnullis nobilium bonorumque hominum prædiis, non ecclesiam sed Sanctæ Crucis signum Deo dicatum, cum magno honore almum, in alto erectum, ad commodam diurnæ orationis sedulitatem solent habere."—*Vita S. Willibaldi*, ap. MABILLON, *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, t. iv.

[2] LINGARD, *op. cit.*, ii. 87-107.

the immense services they rendered, there as everywhere, if not more there than anywhere else, to public instruction and to agriculture. We flatter ourselves that we have furnished, almost at every page of these volumes, evidence of what they have done for the intellectual nourishment of England. It has been seen, that among the Anglo-Saxons, as well as among the Celts of Ireland, Caledonia, and Cambria, monasteries were the sole centres of a religious and liberal education, and that knowledge was there at once much sought, very varied, and very literary. This was not the case solely in the isolated cloisters which were devoted to monastic education. The bishops, all of whom came out of monasteries, changed the cloisters of their cathedrals into schools, and collected around them a numerous band of youths eager for work and for study.

And by the monk-bishops.

One of those public benefactors who distinguished himself the most in this respect, was John, whose name we have already met as one of the intruders who repeatedly divided between them the diocese of Wilfrid.[1] We may justly be blamed for not dwelling longer on him, so great was his popularity among the English of his own day, and until the end of the middle ages.[2] Though he was best known under the

John of Beverley, monk, bishop, and one of the most popular saints in England.

[1] See vol. iv. p. 302, note 2, and p. 339.

[2] The banner of St John of Beverley was placed with those of St Wilfrid and St Cuthbert on the sacred cart at the battle of the Standard in 1138 (see vol. iv. p. 360). The same banner was the oriflamme of Edward I. in one of his great expeditions. Two centuries later the popu-

name of St John of Beverley, from the place where he passed the last four years of his life in solitude, and which afterwards became one of the greatest monastic establishments of the north of England,[1] he was in the first place a monk at Whitby under the great Abbess Hilda, and afterwards bishop, in succession, of Hexham and York. He was a disciple of Archbishop Theodore, and it was he who had the honour of conferring the orders of deacon and priest upon the venerable Bede. Between these two great luminaries of the Anglo-Saxon Church,
686-718. he himself shone during his thirty-two years' episcopate with a pure and gentle light, thanks to his tender anxiety for all the spiritual and temporal necessities of his flock, and the supernatural help which he brought to them in their sicknesses and troubles. Bede has devoted several chapters full of interest to his history. He exhibits him to us employing the most minute and affectionate pains to heal a poor young cripple, who was dumb and afflicted with scurvy, of all his infirmities, but especially of his dumbness, teaching him by the aid of

larity of the holy abbot of Beverley was renewed by the coincidence of the feast of *his translation*, celebrated in 1037 on the 25th October, falling on the day of the victory of Agincourt. Shakespeare (as also the Roman Breviary) speaks only of St Crispin and Crispianus as patrons of that day. But in August 1421 Henry V. gave thanks for his victory before the shrine of the Anglo-Saxon saint at Beverley.

[1] It included a monastery of Benedictines, a college of canons, and a nunnery. The church, built at first by St John, was destroyed by the Danes, re-established by Athelstane, respected by William the Conqueror, and rebuilt magnificently in the thirteenth century. It is one of the finest monuments of English architecture.

heaven to speak and read, and beginning with the alphabet like the humblest of teachers.[1]

But another scene, which touches our subject more immediately, is that in which we behold him surrounded by a group of youths, some ecclesiastics, but the greater part laymen, whom the monk-bishop trained to the study of letters and music, without extinguishing in them the taste for athletic exercises, which was then, as now, inherent in the English race. These students followed their master on horseback through his pastoral visitations, and when they found themselves on level ground took advantage of the occasion to ride races with each other at the risk of breaking their heads, as happened to a young monk, afterwards Abbot of Tynemouth, who related all these details to the venerable Bede. The joyous impetuosity of the young horsemen, their entreaties to the bishop for permission to ride their races under his eyes, the consent which was finally wrested from him under the condition that his favourite among them should remain by his side, the impossibility which this favourite experienced of resisting the impulse and example of his comrades, his wild gallop to rejoin the others, his accident, his swoon, the tender

Monastic students and horse-racing.

[1] "Jussit ad se intrare pauperem, ingresso eo, linguam proferre ex ore ac sibi ostendere jussit. . . . *Dicito*, inquiens, *aliquod verbum, dicito Gæ.* . . . Addidit episcopus nomina litterarum: *Dicito A:* dixit ille, A. *Dicito B:* dixit ille et hoc. . . . Neque ultra cessavit tota die ac nocte sequente, quantum vigilare potuit . . . loqui aliquid, et arcana, suæ cogitationis ac voluntatis, quod nunquam antea potuit, aliis ostendere."—*Hist. Eccles.*, v. 2.

anxiety of the good prelate, the cares which he lavished on the imprudent youth, passing the entire night in prayer by his side, until the dying young man opened his eyes, and said, "I know you; you are my bishop, whom I love;" all this makes up one of the most complete and attractive pictures in the abundant stores of the great monastic historian.[1]

We must stop short here in order not to begin over again, as we should be too often tempted to do, the edifying but monotonous tale which proves the studious fervour of both masters and pupils in the monastic schools.

Services to agriculture.

But it is impossible to avoid a brief notice of what has been done by the monks in England for the improvement of agriculture. It is impossible to forget the use they made of so many vast districts, uncultivated and uninhabited, covered with forests or surrounded with marshes. Such was, it must not be forgotten, the true nature of

[1] "Cum in primævo adolescentiæ tempore in clero illius degerem legendi canendique studiis traditus . . . contigit nos iter agentes cum illo devenisse in viam planam et amplam aptamque cursui equorum: cœperuntque juvenes, maxime laici, postulare episcopum ut cursu majore equos suos invicem probare liceret. At ille primo negavit . . . sed ad ultimum multorum unanima intentione devictus: *Facite*, inquit, *ut vultis*. . . . Ipse diligentius obsecrans, ut et mihi certandi cum illis copia daretur. . . . Cum sæpius, spectante me et episcopo, concitatis in cursum equis reverterentur, ipse lascivo animo non me potui cohibere, sed, prohibente licet illo, ludentibus me miscui. . . . Audivi illum post tergum mihi cum gemitu dicentem: *O quam magnam væ facis mihi sic equitando*. . . . Dum fervens equus quoddam itineris concavum valentiore impetu transiliret, lapsus decidi, sensum perdidi. . . . Evenit ut . . . infracto pollice capitis quoque junctura solveretur. . . . Vomebam saguinem. . . . At ego aperiens oculos aio: *Etiam; tu es antistes amatus*."—BEDE, v. 6.

the vast estates given to the monks, and which had thus the double advantage of offering to communities the most inaccessible retreat that could be found, and of imposing the least possible sacrifice upon the munificence of the givers. They surmounted all the difficulties which stared them in the face, of beginning the cultivation of a new country; the forests were cleared, the marshes made wholesome or dried up, the soil irrigated or drained according to the requirements of each locality; and bridges, roads, dykes, havens, and lighthouses were erected wherever their possessions or influence extended, in evidence of their unwearied and watchful fervour. The half at least of broad Northumberland was lost in sandy plains and barren heaths; the half of East Anglia and a considerable part of Mercia were covered with marshes difficult of access, in the midst of which the future king, Ethelbald, found refuge with the hermit Guthlac: yet in both regions the monks substituted for these uninhabited deserts fat pasturage and abundant harvests.[1]

The latter district, the present name of which (*the Fens*) alone recalls the marshy and unwholesome nature of the original soil, became the principal theatre of the triumphs of agricultural industry performed by the monks. Medehamstede,[2] Ely, Croyland, Thorney, Ramsey, were the first battle-

[1] Cf. LINGARD, i. 267.

[2] The original name of Peterborough; see vol. iv. p. 176.

fields of these conquerors of nature, these monks who made of themselves ploughmen, breeders and keepers of stock, and who were the true fathers of English agriculture, which, thanks to their traditions and example, has become the first agriculture in the world.

The English word *improvement*, so frequently used, and so expressive in relation to everything that concerns bodily and mental labour, seems to have been invented expressly for their use. As much might be said for another word, more ancient still but not less used—the word *landlord*, which expresses not only the sentiment of dominion and territorial possession, but also that kind of tutelary and almost paternal solicitude which so happily combines the obligations and the rights of property. They were the best of *landlords;* such is the testimony given, by all attentive and conscientious observers of the past history of England, to the monks who were the originators of ecclesiastical property in that country, and who long remained its sole guardians. It was not only by their gifts, by their able and generous indulgence towards their direct dependants, that they exercised upon the inferior classes an influence always benevolent, and always gratefully acknowledged. It was by the effectual, enlightened, and unwearied protection which they extended to the poor and weak, who were under other laws and served other masters. "They were," according to

one of the great masters of modern learning, "permanent mediators between the rich and poor, between the strong and the weak; and it must be said to their eternal honour that they understood and fulfilled in a marvellous way the duties of this noble mission. They alone had the right and the means of arresting the rough hand of power, of mitigating the just severity of the law, of showing a gleam of hope to the eye of the slave, and of finding, even in this world, a place and means of existence for all those forsaken ones whose existence was ignored by the State.[1]

Thus, then, thanks to the Anglo-Saxon Benedictines, the maternal authority of the Church began to extend over all weakness and suffering. It grew visibly, interposing whenever it was necessary against all violence and tyranny.

## III.

Intimate connection of the monastic order with the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy.

How, then, was this office, so godlike and glorious, given, from the very beginning of Christianity in England, to the abbots, the great monks, and the bishops, who were produced by the monastic order? The influence of Christian faith and morality, of which they were the interpreters and guardians, contributed to it more than any other

[1] KEMBLE, *Saxons in England*, vol. ii. p. 375.

reason. But it would be unjust to pass over another cause, almost as effectual—the close and lasting union between the monastic order and the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy. This aristocracy, converted by the monks, promptly and cordially opened its ranks to them. History has not preserved the memory of any race which adopted, not only the belief, but the precepts and counsels of the Gospel with more enthusiasm than did the high nobility, which was composed of the dynasties and ruling families of the Heptarchy. Never and nowhere have so many men of royal or patrician race devoted themselves to the hard discipline of the cloister, to the penitential life of anchorites, to the dangers inseparable from pilgrimages and missions in countries still pagan. This aristocracy, fond of fighting, of good cheer, of all sensual pleasures, and of pomp and magnificence which, both in their own persons and in those of their descendants, became proverbial,[1] found itself all at once ripe for the noblest exploits of self-mortification, of Gospel humility, and chastity. After the first foreign masters, new apostles, issued from its own bosom, continued to show it the path of Christian virtue, marching resolutely at its head.

From thence sprang an alliance between the aristocracy and the clergy, between religion and

[1] "Ex pompa Anglum intelliges."—GUILL. MALMESB., *Vita Aldhelm.*, p. 7.

the State, more characteristic, intimate, and cordial, as has been already said, than existed anywhere else in the Teutonic and Christian world. Anglo-Saxon princes and nobles became in rapid succession monks, abbots, and bishops; but these prelates and clergy, belonging to the sovereign races, retained, in their own country and among their neighbours, a place equal or superior to that which they occupied as laymen. They were instantly recognised or elevated to the most important rank in English society. On the other hand, this rank and those functions were often coveted by men inspired with passions very different from the sacred fire which burned in the heart of Wilfrid, Benedict Biscop, Guthlac, and the other saints who belonged to the highest ranks of Anglo-Saxon nobility.

In England, as elsewhere, and perhaps more than elsewhere, this intimate alliance between the heads of the two forms of society, spiritual and temporal, and the constant mutual action of the one on the other, produced results dear and salutary to the Church as well as to the State. The advantage, however, was almost always greater for the State than for the Church, and indeed sometimes became dangerous and compromised the latter. Abuses there, as everywhere, inevitably followed benefits. These will be evident but too soon. At the same time, before going on to consideration of the shadows which it is impossible to deny or suppress

in a sincere historic picture, let us first contemplate the light which preceded them.

Their intervention in social government and organisation.

It was not certainly by any encroachment either open or concealed on the rights of others, nor by any secret or violent means, that the heads of the monastic order rose to the highest rank in the Anglo-Saxon nation. They were called to it by the natural course of things and the unanimous voice of men. Representatives of the most elevated social offices, initiated into all the necessities of elective government, of communal life, and voluntary subordination, they took their place naturally in a government based, in the first place, upon a social hierarchy consecrated by mutual service and hereditary or freely offered devotion; and in the second, upon the sovereign and permanent action of public assemblies. These envoys of Christianity brought an essentially important and much desired sanction to the usages and institutions which substituted among those noble scions of the Teutonic race the proud independence of an often heroic, but sometimes exacting and troublesome, devotion, for the abject submission of the degraded serfs of the Roman Empire.

Their place in the national assemblies.

Not only the bishops, who all belonged to the monastic order, but abbots, and often abbesses, occupied the first place in those national or provincial assemblies which have been so often referred to in this narrative, and which, under the name of Witenagemot, or assembly of wise men, were the

cradle of the English Parliament; guaranteeing to the Anglo-Saxon people the benefit of a government sustained and controlled by the lay and ecclesiastical nobility, and making decisions which could not be violated or despised with impunity by any monarch.

At the period which we have now arrived at, each kingdom of the Heptarchy, and even each of the tribes comprised in or absorbed by the greatest of those kingdoms,[1] had its special assembly, an institution retained at a later period, when England was united under the sceptre of one monarch, by each *shire* or province. But there also existed assemblies more or less general, the authority of which was recognised in differing degrees by all the divisions of the conquering race. To these conferences especially, which ecclesiastical historians have honoured with the name of councils, the presence of several monk-bishops, presided over by their metropolitan, a monk like themselves, had the power of giving a more august character. The council of Hertford, presided over by the Greek Theodore,[2] decreed that a general synod should be held twice a-year at Cloveshove. But, besides that this assembly appears to have been exclusiely ecclesiastical, there is no evidence that its decree was obeyed. A century passed before England possessed

673.

[1] Such as the Hwiccas, the Middle Angles in Mercia, and the Gyrwas in East Anglia.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 212.

one sole, permanent, and regular assembly. At the same time, from the introduction of Christianity, local or national assemblies became visible, constituting a great council of the whole country, and meeting periodically at Christmas and at Easter.

Their composition.

The monastic prelates held their seats in these assemblies, at once as the doctors and spiritual guides of the nation and as great landed proprietors, whose importance was daily increased by the extent of the new gifts which were lavished upon them, and by the increasing agricultural value of their old possessions. They sat in the first rank with the principal lords, the great chiefs of the nobility, the governors of provinces, called earls or ealdormen;[1] and above the other proprietors who, under the name of thanes, composed the greater part of the assembly. According to the theory most generally received by modern learning,[2] each thane or proprietor might reach the rank of earl[3] by the choice of the king or nomina-

[1] Whom Bede entitles *duces* or *comites*, proving their rank to be equal to that of the bishop. *Ealdor* or *elder* answers to the Latin *senior*, from whence comes *seigneur*. This ancient title, once the first in the Saxon hierarchy, the bearers of which, either hereditary or for their lifetime, were almost the equals of the king, may be recognised to-day in the name of *alderman*, which has fallen exclusively, as we have already remarked, to elective municipal officials in London and the other great cities.

[2] See TURNER, *History of the Anlgo-Saxons*, vol. iii. p. 48, 115, 123, 130, 135, 137 (Paris edition, 1840); PALGRAVE, *Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth*, vol. ii. p. 376, 385; and KEMBLE, *The Saxons in England*, vol. i. c. v.

[3] Kemble, however, believes that, like the kings, they could be taken only from certain principal families.

tion of the assembly. Every *ceorl*, or free man, whatever his origin might be, could be advanced to the rank of thane if he possessed lands of a certain extent. Every merchant who had made three journeys beyond seas rose into the same class. But no nobleman by birth could sit in the Witenagemot unless he were a landed proprietor.[1]

Whatever uncertainty may exist as to the distinctive qualifications of the two principal elements of these assemblies, it is proved that, far from forming different castes, the *eorls* and *thanes*[2]

[1] It was necessary to possess five *hydes*, or *mansi*, for three generations in order to be a thane, and forty to be an *eorl* or *caldorman*. This distinction is principally founded on the evidence of a monastic historian of Ely (*Liber Eliensis*, ap. GALE, *Scriptores*, vol. ii. c. 40), speaking of the brother-in-law of his abbot, who could not, for want of those forty hydes, obtain the hand of the daughter *præpotentis viri*. He adds, "Licet nobilis esset, inter proceres tunc nominari non potuit." Let us state, at the same time, that Kemble disputes the necessity of a territorial qualification for admission to the *Witan*. And let us also remember that Abbot Benedict Biscop received eight of these *mansi* or lands for an illuminated volume. The real amount of the *hyde* (in German *hof*) remains to be discovered; the opinions of the learned are cruelly diverse on this respect, varying between a minimum of 30 acres and a maximum of 120. The acre, or day's measure, meant here, as everywhere, as much land as a pair of oxen could plough in a day. Cf. ELLIS, *Introduction to Domesday Book*, and KEMBLE, *op. cit.*

[2] The meaning of the word *thane*, or *thegn*, has evidently varied like that of *fidelis*, or *leude* among the Franks, but it answers most generally to the *milites* or *barones* of later times. PALGRAVE, vol. ii. p. 33, 376. The members of the Anglo-Saxon parliaments (*conventus, synodus, concilium*) received thus in public acts and in contemporary authors all sorts of different designations, of which the following are the principal: Proceres, sapientes, principes, senatores, primates, optimates, magnates, majores natu, procuratores patriæ (of this last title there are five examples in Kemble, vol. ii. 199). Many of the acts of these assemblies quoted in the *Codex Diplomaticus Ævi Saxonici*, are furnished with sig-

were only the first among the free men, the heads and representatives of a territorial aristocracy the ranks of which were open to all, like that which has constituted the strength, greatness, and freedom of England for so many centuries, and which, from the beginning, was a national force representing the vital strength of the people, and its interests, will, and immemorial liberties.[1] The popular element also appears and increases slowly as we advance in history. All the inhabitants of the neighbourhood had a right to be present at the assemblies, which, for the most part, were held in the open air; they exercised at least the right of *conclamation*, which consisted in giving their public adherence to the decisions; they could also, according to Palgrave, make complaints and disclose their injuries.[2] Everything leads us to suppose

natures which aid us in proving their composition. The most considerable number of signatures received in one assembly (that of Cloveshove in 825) is 121, of whom 95 were monks or clerks. A charter of 934 proves the presence at the *gemot* of the king, of—

4 Welsh princes.
2 archbishops.
17 bishops.
4 abbots.
12 dukes or ealdormen.
52 thanes.

91; described as "tota populi generalitate."

[1] The people, says Kemble, were the true aristocracy; the nobles were only its chiefs, as the English peers are at present the born chiefs of the aristocracy of freeholders and ten-pound householders. Vol. i. p. 258.

[2] Thus, in the gift given by Duke Ethelstane to the Monastery of Abingdon, the fixing of boundaries, and the excommunication pronounced against transgressors, is confirmed in this fashion:—"Et dixit omnis

that the crowd was swelled by a great number of monks, while their elective chiefs, bishops and abbots of the principal monasteries, took decisive part in the votes and deliberations.

Sovereignty of these assemblies.

In the temporal and spiritual government of the Anglo-Saxon nations, nothing escaped the action of these assemblies. They not only gave forth laws, they shared the actual government with the kings, and took part in all their acts, at least so far as to sanction them. No royal charter or document of state exists which does not prove at once the intervention of the assembly of wise men, and the presence of the monastic clergy in that assembly. The king could do nothing without their help or sanction.[1]

Their attributes.

No important affair was treated, no sovereign decision taken, without this help or sanction, from the nomination of a bishop to the foundation or exemption from national burdens of a new monastery.[2] The spirit of association and the habits of

populus qui ibi aderat: *Fiat, fiat. Amen.*" In Saxon, "Sy hit swa."—*Codex Diplom.*, n. 1129. A charter of Ethelred in 931 declares that the act is confirmed, "Tota plebis generalitate ovante."

[1] PALGRAVE, vol. i. p. 634 to 643; LAPPENBERG, vol. i. p. 577. Beside the great scholars who have in our time renewed the study of English origin, ought to be named a French writer, M. Albert du Boys, who, in his *Histoire du Droit Criminel des Peuples Modernes*, has conscientiously studied and estimated English institutions and legislation, not only in his third volume, which is exclusively devoted to Anglo-Norman feudal law, but also in the previous volumes, in which he has set forth the part taken by the Anglo-Saxon clergy in the social and judicial organisation of society.

[2] This is proved by the expressions of Bede: "Hæc in jus sibi hereditarium edictis regalibus faciunt ascribi, ipsasque quoque litteras privi-

independence which were the foundation of Teutonic liberties, absolutely excluded all idea of social or political abdication into the hands of a master, charged, along with his principal domestics, to think, speak, and act for the nation. Every Anglo-Saxon tribe, great or small, considered itself equal to the management of its own affairs, like the powerful and unconquerable England of our own day. We have seen these assemblies possessed not only of the consultive voice, but deciding with supreme authority as to the introduction of Christianity in the different kingdoms. No public act was valid, no new law could be established, except after discussion by them. Laws were issued by their authority, conjoined to that of the king, never by the crown alone. They decided alliances and treaties of peace, as well as the election and deposition of kings; for among the Anglo-Saxons, as among the Franks, the hereditary character of royalty was by no means absolute. The national assembly chose among the members of the national dynasty the candidate who suited them best. At each election the contract between the king and the people was renewed, often with new clauses, as has been seen even in modern history in the capitulations of the Emperors of Germany and the Kings of Hungary. As for the deposition of kings, the

legiorum suorum . . . pontificum, abbatum et potestatum sæculi obtinent subscriptione confirmari."—*Epist. ad Ecgberthum.* Cf. LINGARD, vol. i. p. 412, 413.

assemblies made little difficulty about it, when their government was unjust or unfortunate; and the monastic clergy, like all the other members of the body political, acquiesced without scruple.[1] With still better reason they regulated everything that concerned the imposition of taxes for the public service, the levy of troops, the use to be made of fines or confiscations suffered by those who broke the penal law, the grants of territory made from the public lands either to monasteries[2] or great captains. In short, they exercised the functions of a supreme court both in cases civil and criminal.[3]

Danger of encroachment in spiritual matters.

No trace is to be found in the Anglo-Saxon historians of any distinction between the assemblies which treated ecclesiastical affairs and those which regulated secular life. Both were managed by the same body, and at the same sitting. It is, however, very probable that the clergy deliberated apart, at least in the first place, with the aid of the king alone,[4] reserving only a power of ratification to the

[1] See the deposition of Sigebert, King of Wessex, in 755 by the princes and the people of his kingdom ("Provida deliberatione et unanimo omnium consensu."—HENRI DE HUNTINGDON); and that of Beornred, King of Mercia in 757, to make room for Offa: "Convenerunt in unum omnes, tam nobiles quam ignobiles, et Offa duce . . . ipsum a regno expulerunt. . . . Quo facto unanimo omnium consensu Offam in regem, tam clerus quam populus coronarunt."—*Flores Histor.*, ap. PALGRAVE, ii. 279.

[2] All the acts of this description bear the mention: "Cum licentia et consensu procerum" or "sapientium," &c.

[3] BEDE, *passim; Chron. Angl. Saxon.*; and KEMBLE, vol. ii.

[4] This is the opinion of Kemble, who believes that there were two houses, as among the Franks, one composed of laymen and the other of ecclesiastics, but both under the presidency of the king.

general assembly. The distinction between temporal and spiritual matters was not the less clearly maintained, decrees touching doctrine or discipline made out by the bishops alone being published at the head of the acts of the national assemblies, and apart from the other decisions submitted for the sanction of public authority.[1]

Salutary and powerful influence of the monks upon the assemblies, and consequently upon laws and morals.

There is, however, in the history of the first centuries of the Church in England, no trace of the conflict between the two powers which afterwards became so frequent, so bitter, and prolonged. As for the encroachments of spiritual authority in temporal matters in the sphere of national life of which these assemblies were the centre, nobody was tempted to complain of, or even to perceive its existence. Yet the public of these days was much less able to appreciate the salutary and wonderful results of the influence of monastic prelates and missionaries upon the institutions and character of the Anglo-Saxons than we are. At present the most prejudiced critics are compelled to avow that the influence of the monastic clergy in the public and social life of the English was of the most benevolent and effectual character. To them must be attributed, from the time of the first laws made by the parliament of Ethelbert, under the influence of the Roman missionaries,[2] the gradual progress of humanity and justice in the national legislation,

[1] LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 33.

[2] "Juxta exemplum Romanorum."—BEDE, ii. 5. See vol. iii. p. 393.

which up to that period had been too feeble to struggle against the ferocious and covetous instincts of the barbarous conquerors.

To them belongs also the honour of that transformation of morals and souls which, notwithstanding a thousand backslidings and a thousand melancholy fallings back into ancient barbarism, showed itself in the generosity and piety of the laymen, in the obedience and fervour of a clergy drawn daily in greater numbers from the bosom of the native population. To them the credit of having introduced into the laws and customs a respect for property, and, above all, for human life, no trace of which had previously existed among the savage invaders of Great Britain. To them the honour of having contributed more than any other, by the uniformity of their wise counsels and good examples, by the unity of their doctrine and discipline, to introduce into the Anglo-Saxon nations a unity of legislation and of government which gradually led to national unity. They strengthened the throne by teaching and enforcing the practice of Christian virtues; they sanctioned and regulated the ancient Teutonic principles of the responsibility of kings, of their subordination to law, to their sworn faith and social contracts; they placed those principles under the safeguard of religion by the solemnity of consecration; they thus imprinted an august and sacred, and at the same time a limited and conditional, character upon the throne. In

They contributed to create national unity in England.

addition to this, while forearming it against the excesses and usurpations of princes and lords, they laboured energetically to give to it the force and authority necessary to triumph over the dismemberment of the Heptarchy, and to create that unity, not absolute and absorbing like that which has wasted or enervated other illustrious nations, but sufficient, and in conformity with the genius and necessities of the English race, and which, when once fully established in the ninth century, has never more run the risk of attack or alteration.[1]

Their zeal for the poor. Public charity a work of expiation

To them above all belongs the honour of having introduced into morals and the laws that solicitude for the inferior classes which is too often absent from the hearts of the powerful. The discoveries of modern erudition have established without doubt the unexpected result that the material condition of the inferior and serf population was not universally a state of hardship. Their labours were not more severe nor their wages less than those of our own days.[2] At the same time it is impossible to doubt that the weak were often made victims of the violence and wickedness of the strong in the ancient English world, as everywhere else. How many oppressed innocents, how many violated rights, how

[1] PALGRAVE, p. 655, 656 ; LAPPENBERG, i. 203. Since the union of the Heptarchy under Egbert of Wessex in 800, England has never been dismembered as France was repeatedly under the Carlovingians and Capets.

[2] Each serf received for himself and his family 720 loaves yearly, without counting the midday and evening meal.—KEMBLE, vol. i. p. 213.

many unknown or unpunished crimes existed in the midst of silence and isolation, in the vast regions still so sparsely inhabited? But in proportion as religion penetrated by the influence of the monks, light arose, and justice appeared. Little by little, voices which could not be stifled arose, powerful hands were elevated to protect and avenge the victims. The oppressor stopped trembling; he had to bow, to repent, to make restitution, to expiate; and expiation almost always took the form of an act of fraternal charity, a service rendered to the community. As religious and monastic influence increased in the nation, the habit and duty of soothing suffering and remedying injustice became general. In every powerful family frequent acts of voluntary renunciation took the place of the brigandage, the robberies, and violence which had been up to that time their daily bread.

Every crime that was expiated, every penance that was accomplished by the efforts of the monks, thus contributed to public utility and happiness.[1] The long-unpunished culprits from whom the new faith wrested a tardy confession, an act of contrition or restitution, were often exempted from bodily penances, but were always constrained to pay the ransom of that exemption by acts of charity, which not only eased actual misery, but provided for the necessities of the future.

The penances imposed by the monks upon these

[1] BURKE, *Essay on English History*, p. 223.

great sinners and penitents, were not pious works and ecclesiastical foundations alone, but oftener still the deliverance of captives, the mending of a road, the rebuilding of a bridge or of cottages, the food and maintenance of peasants brought to want by intestine wars;[1] they had a thousand devices, a thousand resources, all consecrated to the same charitable and sacred end.

The abundant gifts showered upon the churches and monasteries by the fervour of new Christians, and at the same time by the remorse of opulent sinners, were thus transformed into great and permanent benefits for the suffering members of society, for the poor and homeless, the sick, the widows, orphans, and poor travellers who were exposed to so many dangers and trials by the rudeness of the time. By this means an unfailing channel was established by which the munificence of the rich, the strong, and the happy of this world flowed forth upon the weak, the poor, and the unfortunate. It was a great public office which, without being regulated or imposed by law, took the place of all the complications with which modern legislation has invested public charity.[2] In short, it was the realisation and application of that great law of mercy and brotherly compassion which is one of the most solid and necessary foundations of human society.

Among the services rendered by the Anglo-Saxon

[1] LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 258.
[2] KEMBLE, vol. ii. p. 514-516.

monks to suffering humanity, none is more touching or more continual than their solicitude for those who stood on the lowest step of the social hierarchy—the slaves. The famous incident of the English captives bought in the Roman market by St Gregory, shows us, at the beginning of this narrative, that even the sons of the conquering race were not safe from this climax of misery. But under the progressive power of the faith preached by the missionaries of Pope Gregory and their successors, the number of slaves gradually diminished.[1] Notwithstanding that the trade was forbidden by decrees and councils, a hundred times repeated, and too often evaded, it continued to be carried on as a matter of commerce,[2] but very few slaves were kept in the country itself. They did not, however, form a separate race, sprung either from the conquering Saxons or the vanquished Britons; they were recruited from the descendants of Roman slaves, from unransomed prisoners of war, and delinquents condemned to penal servitude. The monks devoted their most strenuous exertions to the still further reduction of the number. The example of the noble Wilfrid, whose first act was to free the 250 serfs who were given him by the

Their zeal for the liberation of slaves.

[1] KEMBLE, i. 220; LAPPENBERG, i. 575; PALGRAVE, i. 29. At the end of the Anglo-Saxon period there were only 25,000 in England according to the census in *Domesday Book*, which reckons 275,000 proprietors.

[2] It was, however, forbidden to sell them to heathens; the laws of Ethelred and Canute contain formal prohibitions in this respect.

King of the South Saxons, along with the lands intended for his episcopal monastery, proves that they were capable of seeking the freedom of their fellow-creatures at their own expense.

Stern truth compels us to confess that this was not the case everywhere. The honest pen of monastic annalists has preserved the letter of a monk of royal Mercian blood, Brithwald, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, in which he insists upon the deliverance of a young slave who was held in bondage by the Abbot of Glastonbury. "Since I have failed," he writes to the Bishop of Sherborne, "in the first entreaty I addressed to him by word of mouth in your presence, I think it my duty to send you this letter from the girl's brother, and beseech you to make the abbot accept the three hundred sols which the bearer will give you for her ransom, that she may be sent back to us, to pass the rest of her life among her own people, not in the sadness of slavery, but in the joy of freedom. He will thus lose nothing of the right he has over her."[1]

[1] "Quomodo petitio mea, qua precatus sum coram te venerabilem Beornvaldum abbatem de concedenda unius captivæ puellæ . . . redemptione, in irritum, contra quod credidi, cessit . . . obsecro ut ipse omnino obtineas a prædicto abbate, quatenus . . . tradas illam huc usque perducendam, quod possit reliquum vitæ suæ spatium cum consanguineis suis, non in servitutis tristitia, sed in libertatis transigere lætitia. . . . Frater noster Beornwaldus nihil, ut æstimo, de eo quod in ea juste possedit, amittit."—*Inter Epist. S. Bonifacii*, n. 7, ed. Jaffé. It has been already seen that Archbishop Brithwald had been educated at Glastonbury before he was elected abbot of the royal monastery of Reculver. Cf. Bede, v. 8, and Hook, *Lives of the Archbishops*, vol. i. p. 178 and 188.

This is the only example of monastic slave-holding which I have been able to discover, and fortunately the prompt and generous amendment of the evil is to be found by the side of the evil itself. If it had been otherwise, with what authority could the monks have laboured for the extinction of this plague? They neglected no means besides of diminishing the number of cases in which slavery could be legalised or tolerated. The emancipation or redemption of slaves was the work of charity which they most recommended and insisted on. Thanks to their presence in the political assemblies, provisions were introduced into the laws freeing the slaves who had been overworked by their masters, or who had been obliged to work on Sunday.[1] And by their presence at the deathbed of so many penitent sinners, they were able to introduce clauses into wills which provided for the salvation of the soul of the dying, by giving freedom to the survivors. Nothing was more frequent in the *Codex Diplomaticus* of the Anglo-Saxon period than acts of manumission, and all, or almost all, stated the religious motives which produced these acts, and the religious guarantees which sanctioned them. The freed slave was offered to God before the altar

[1] See specially the law made by Ina by the advice of the two archbishops, Hedda and Erconwald: "Si servus operetur dominica die per præceptum domini sui, sit liber." The council of Berkhampstead condemned to a fine of eighty pence the master who compelled his serf to work on Sunday. From thence comes the name of *Freolsday*, or day of freedom, given to Sunday.—LINGARD, i. 310.

of the nearest church, and then declared free in presence of the monks and the congregation of the faithful. It was upon the fly-leaf of the book of the Gospels, or some other church-book, that the charter of affranchisement was registered.[1] The first vindications of individual freedom have thus come down to us inscribed on the margin of monastic missals, as the first indications of parliamentary government appear in the gifts given to monasteries with the sanction of assembled Witans.

These glorious and persevering apostles of the laws of God neither despised nor neglected any of the rights of men. Honour and justice, humanity and pity, knowledge and reason, were placed along with the new faith and Christian morality under the safeguard of their precepts and their unwearied watchfulness. All things fair and lovely and of good report which man has a right to love and desire, after as well as before his conversion, and more warmly still, being a Christian, than when he was not so—all the natural virtues, all the legitimate aspirations of the sons of Adam—were appreciated, claimed, and defended under the forms accessible or possible in these far-distant days, with an energy, watchfulness, and courage of which there are few examples in history, by the monastic apostles of Great Britain.

I have sought out with laborious care, and related with scrupulous truthfulness, everything that

[1] KEMBLE, *Saxons in England*, vol. i. p. 225.

could throw light on the influence of Christianity, as preached by the monks, upon the early history of the English people. I have acknowledged that here, as everywhere else, this divine religion has been too often powerless and ineffectual amid the coarse and perverse inclinations of fallen nature. But I have met at every step the brilliant victories of self-devotion and faith, of disinterestedness and purity, of true greatness, true courage, and the most magnanimous charity. And what is still more wonderful and more consoling is the total absence, not to be met with in the same degree in the most boasted ages and circumstances, of everything which degrades or compromises religion in those who teach and represent it. I assert joyfully that in the lives of so many apostles and ministers of celestial verity, I have not come upon a single evidence of fanaticism, of egotism, of baseness, severity, or stupid indifference to human sufferings. The student will search in vain in the records of those forgotten lives for traces of anything narrow, sombre, or pitiless; he will find there nothing that could enslave or enervate the human heart—nothing which could wound good sense, reason, or justice—nothing which savours of that arrogant and cruel Pharisaism with which all priesthoods are attacked or threatened—nothing, in short, which does not breathe respect for the freedom of souls, and the most exquisite sense of honour in all the things of God.

## IV.

They perfected the national character without changing it.

But there is yet another result for which we owe them everlasting gratitude. The monastic missionaries, while they transformed the morals and faith of the Anglo-Saxon conquerors, did nothing to change the native genius of the Teutonic race.

They made of it a nation of Christians more fervent, more liberal, more docile, and attached to the Church, more magnificent in its gifts to monasteries, more fruitful in saintly men and women,[1] than any other contemporary nation; but they deprived it of none of its public virtues, none of its bold and energetic instincts; they did not withdraw from it an atom of its manful nature, they diminished in nothing the boldness and independence which have remained up to our own day the distinguishing characteristics of the English people.

The influence of a new faith never respected more scrupulously the unity, independence, and powerful originality of the converted race, of its language, manners, institutions, its ancient laws, and its national spirit.[2]

[1] Without speaking of holy bishops, abbots, hermits, &c., twenty-three kings and sixty queens, princes, or princesses, sprung from the different Anglo-Saxon dynasties, are reckoned from the seventh to the eleventh century among the saints recognised by the Church. No other nation has ever furnished such a contingent.

[2] This is loyally acknowledged by the German Protestant Lappenberg

Augustin and Paulinus, Wilfrid and Theodore, *emissaries of Rome*, as they have been called by certain historians, and who were in reality the most direct agents, the most immediate envoys from the Holy See which had been yet seen in Christendom, neither introduced nor attempted to introduce any essential change in the political and social institutions, so different from those of the Roman world, which the Anglo-Saxon nation had brought from the shores of Germany, or found in the smoking ruins of Great Britain. Satisfied with having deposited in these brave hearts the secrets of eternity, the rules of moral life, and strength to struggle against the corruption natural to every man born of woman, they left intact the spirit of the race, so that underneath his Christian vestment the old Teuton still stood perfect and complete.

Many times already in this narrative, following the example of many other writers, we have remarked upon the singular unchangeableness of the Anglo-Saxon character. Manners, vices, virtues, laws, customs, rights, names, titles, tastes, language, spirit, even down to its sports and violent exercises, everything that the modern world admires or fears, is attracted or repelled by, in the England of to-day ;[1]

(vol. i. 132, 144, 629), in contradiction to the superannuated tirades of Hume, Henry, Soames, and the *servum pecus* of their copyists in England and France.

[1] "The modern Englishman is already to be found in the Saxon. Each man in his own house, master of himself, erect and complete, with nothing to control or encroach upon him." — TAINE, *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise.* Any who read the most faithful and complete

all is to be found in germ or flower in the England of twelve centuries ago. No nation has been less changed by time or conquest.

All the towns and almost all the villages of modern England seem to have existed from the time of the Saxons; the names and actual boundaries of parishes, counties or *shires*, with their subdivisions, their judicial and political machinery, their religious and civil life, all date back into the period between the seventh and tenth centuries.

But the names and external forms are far from being all that have endured—it is the soul, the glorious and manful soul, of the converted Saxon which reveals itself in the modern Englishman. Civil virtues altogether unknown to the enslaved Christians of Rome and Byzantium, and, above all, that lofty sentiment of self-respect in certain men and certain classes which is the cradle of all liberty, developed themselves in the shadow of those wonders of humility, self-abnegation, charity, and piety, of which we have spoken at such length—and formed the foundation of that public spirit and those public rights which have never ceased to grow amid all storms and eclipses. *Self-government*, that is to say, the proud independence of the free man among his fellows in the general commonwealth—and *parliamentary government*, that is, the unequal division of

picture I know of the political and social organisation of England—that given by M. Le Play in his admirable work, *La Réforme Sociale*—will be struck with the persistence of the distinctive features of British character and institutions as they appear among the Saxons.

supreme power between the crown and the national assemblies—already existed in their essential elements. When it was needful, by a natural, though too often momentary, outburst, public freedom stepped forth, armed and invincible in the collective force of individual and local freedom. The *common law* of England, that traditional and unwritten code, "the sources of which are as unknown as those of the Nile,"[1] plunges its roots into old Saxon customs, recognised, sanctioned, and published in those assemblies which were inspired and filled up by our monks; and all charters, as well as all ulterior revolutions, have served only to define and confirm that ancient and immovable foundation of English freedom.[2]

Agreement between the monastic order and the spirit of Anglo-Saxon institutions.

To hearts thus tempered, and a race thus ruled, the monastic institution, under the form which it had adopted in England, must have been in sympathy and accord, even independently of the religion of which it was the fruit and ornament. The monasteries were types of those great existences, at once individual and collective, founded on a great moral idea, but supported by great landed property, which are still distinctive features of the social machinery of England; which have everywhere been one of the essential conditions of public freedom; and which seem as natural to the masculine and active genius of the ancient Teutonic races as they are alien to modern civilisation and incom-

[1] Expression used by the celebrated Lord Chief-Justice Hales.

[2] Cf. FISCHEL, *Die Verfassung Englands*, p. 25.

patible with Cæsarism. For this reason it was to be expected that a natural liking for monasteries, whose founders had brought from the heart of Roman slavery a system of common security, spontaneous freedom, and elective functions entirely in conformity with the instincts and habits of the Teutonic races, should have arisen among the Anglo-Saxons.

Munificence and prodigality of the aristocracy.

Hence no doubt sprang that inexhaustible munificence, that prodigality, so long displayed by the Anglo-Saxon royalty and nobility in its relations with the monastic orders. The possessions of the Church, which then meant, almost exclusively, the possessions of monasteries, were increased daily by new foundations, or by fresh gifts added to previously existing establishments. We have already more than once pointed out the motives of these gifts, as they are expressed in the acts of the times, or as they are made evident by study of the circumstances and arrangements which accompanied them.

Motives of donations.

A profound feeling of the instability and decay of everything human, and, above all, of material wealth;[1] humble gratitude towards God, from

[1] "Nihil intulimus in hunc mundum, veram nec auferre quid possumus: iccirco terrenis ac caducis æterna cœlestis patriæ præmia mercanda sunt. Quapropter," &c.—Charter of Aldraed, prince of the Hwiccas, in 759, ap. *Codex Diplomat. Ævi Saxonici*, vol. i. "Universa quippe quæ hic in præsentia nisibus humanis corporaliter contemplantur, nihil esse nisi vana, caduca, transitoriaque, ex sacrorum voluminum testimoniis certissime verum patet; et tamen cum istis, æternaliter sine fine mansura alta polorum regna et vigiter florentis paradisi amœnitas mercari a fidelibus queunt. Quapropter," &c.—Charter of Offa, King of Mercia, in 779, *ibid.*

whom every good gift is held, and to whom a portion of His own blessings are believed to be restored by improving the condition of His ministers;[1] the desire and hope of expiating the faults of a troubled life, of redeeming the backslidings of human weakness, and of making restitution of ill-gotten wealth, either by guaranteeing the livelihood of a class of men exclusively devoted to the service of God and the practice of virtue,[2] or by securing permanent help and supply for the poor, the sick, and the forsaken; in the lack of natural heirs, the hope of creating a kind of spiritual posterity, bound to pray always for the soul of their benefactor; sometimes, as in the case of the Childe Ethelbald,[3] who was an exile before he was a king, the recollection of and gratitude for benefits received, and shelter given in the monastic sanctuary; oftener still the desire of securing for themselves and their friends a burial-place protected by holy places and holy men, and which should itself protect a religious community against the ingratitude and rapacity of the future;[4] and, in short, and always, the certainty of disposing of their lands for the advantage of the most industrious, useful, and charitable of men.

[1] "Quotiens sanctis ac venerabilibus locis vestris aliquid offerre videmur, vestra nobis reddimus, non nostra largimur. Quapropter," &c. —Charter of Ethelred, King of Essex, 692, 693, *ibid.*

[2] LINGARD, vol. i. p. 251.

[3] See the preceding chapter.

[4] BURKE, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

Such were the motives, legitimate and frankly confessed, which led so many Anglo-Saxon princes, lords, and rich men, to despoil themselves for the benefit of monasteries. They may be all summed up in that fine text which the Church still offers yearly to our meditation: "*Concludemus eleemosynam in sinu pauperis et ipsa exorabit pro nobis.*"[1]

Abuse of the territorial gifts.

But, as has happened everywhere and at all times, in the history of the Church as well as in that of the world, evil rose by the side of the good, and abuses came in with a strong hand under the shelter of the most salutary customs. It is undeniable that these territorial grants made to monasteries exceeded the limits of justice and reason. "*Donationes stultissimæ*," says Bede, speaking of the gifts of the kings of Northumbria.[2] Although made and sanctioned by royal authority, in concert with that of the parliaments or Witenagemot, they at last went so far as seriously to threaten the public peace.

This will be easily understood by recollecting the nature of landed property among the Anglo-Saxons. From the Conquest, or first establishment of laws of property, besides the *hlot* or *allods*,[3] given to the first occupants, vast territories were reserved for the public service, or for future

[1] Prayer *Attende*, taken from Eccli. xxix. 15.
[2] See above, p. 80.
[3] *Lots.*

division, the liferent of which alone could be given to free men under certain conditions. This was called *folc-land,* the land of the people, and has been justly compared to the *ager publicus* of the Romans.[1] New *allods* were taken from this, on occasion, to reward or encourage new services. Thus Benedict Biscop, the young lord who afterwards became the founder of Wearmouth and Yarrow, received from the king lands suitable to his rank, which he did not hesitate to restore to the king when he became a monk.[2] These territorial grants, whether given to laymen by hereditary right, or to religious communities, could only be granted by the king with the consent of his *witan,* and in virtue of a charter or deed resembling a book—from whence came the name of *boc-land,* or land given by book. Everything which did not continue part of the folc-land was thus designated. All donations of land made to the Church—that is to say, to monasteries—were made under this name and form. Subjects could make no other gifts, as the boc-land was the only thing in their power. Kings might detach a bit of their own boc-land to make a gift of it, as Egfrid did to Benedict Biscop;[3] but the consent of the *witan* was necessary in order to transform any

*Folc-land and boc-land.*

[1] KEMBLE, vol. i. ch. ix. p. 289.

[2] "Cum esset Oswii regis minister, et possessionem terræ suo gradui competentem, illo donante perciperet, despexit militiam cum corruptibili donativo terrestrem."—BEDE, *Vita S. Bened.*, § 1, ap. Op. Min., ii. 140.

[3] "Ut confestim ei terram septuaginta familiarum *de suo* largitus, monasterium inibi præciperet facere."—BEDE, *Hist. Abbat.*, c. 4.

portion of folc-land into a hereditary and perpetual patrimony.[1]

Lands thus given to the monasteries were naturally withdrawn from those obligations relative to military service which weighed upon all landed proprietors, as is apparent from the expressions used by Bede in recording the donation made by King Oswy when he consecrated his daughter Elfleda to religious life. Besides his daughter, says the historian, he gave to the Church twelve estates of six families each, which were freed from earthly military service to furnish to the monks the means of devoting themselves to the celestial army, and praying for the eternal peace of the nation.[2]

This substitution of the spiritual combats of the celestial army for the military obligations of other Anglo-Saxon landowners was followed or accompanied by a still more important privilege conferred on the new monastic proprietors. The folc-land or public domain, when transformed into *allods* or boc-lands—that is to say, into individual property—remained subject to all the public or private burdens which weighed upon the domain,

[1] LINGARD, vol. i. p. 250, and Note K, p. 407-411.

[2] "Donatis insuper duodecim possessiunculis terrarum, in quibus ablato studio militiæ terrestris ad exercendam militiam cœlestem, supplicandumque pro pace gentis ejus æterna, devotioni sedulæ monachorum locus facultasque suppeteret."—BEDE, iii. 24. Kemble and Lingard do not hesitate to suppose that these twelve domains were taken from the folc-land and changed into boc-land for the advantage of the new monasteries. In the Anglo-Saxon translation, attributed to King Alfred, the word *possessiuncula* is translated boc-land.

and at the same time became subject to ordinary imposts when the grant was given to laymen. But it was exempt from those burdens when given to monasteries; and when this exemption had not been duly stipulated for in the original donations, deeds were afterwards drawn out, establishing them in the possession of privileges which the pious munificence of after generations made it a duty and pleasure to confer upon the monastic churches.[1] It has been seen above that from the end of the seventh century a council had recognised this assumed exemption of monasteries from burdens and taxes—excepting only the three tributes or obligations from which no one was excused,[2] and which regarded the expenses of military expeditions, and the keeping up of bridges and of fortresses—as a general law.

The increasing number of monastic foundations, and the vast extent of territorial gifts lavished upon them, produced, at the end of about a century, an alarming result—the diminution of the military resources of the country. It was not, as has been said, that the nation became less warlike, or that a too exclusive regard for religious things had turned the kings and people of the Heptarchy

[1] The *Codex Diplomaticus* contains numberless deeds which secure the land "liberam ab omnibus terrenis difficultatibus, sive a pastu regis, principis, exactoris . . . a pastu et refectione omnium accipitrum et falconum in terra Mercensium," &c.

[2] This is called in the charters "trinoda necessitas, generalis incommoditas, communis labor." See above, p. 152.

from their public duties. But the number of proprietors bound to personal military service went on diminishing, — on one side, because of the change of lay lands into privileged monastic possessions; and on the other hand, by the many religious vocations which arose among the warlike nobility. The prince of the Anglo-Saxon monks, the illustrious Bede, was the first to point out this danger, with the frankness which was habitual to him. "In the midst of the peace and security which we enjoy," he wrote in 731, "many Northumbrians, some noble, some humble, put aside their arms, cut their hair, and hasten to enrol themselves in the monastic ranks, instead of exercising themselves in their military duties. The future will tell what good will result from this."[1]

Four years afterwards, in his famous letter to the Archbishop of York, which we have quoted at length,[2] he expresses a much more energetic disapproval. He unveils at the same time the true character of the evil; he declares without hesitation that the defence of the country is endangered by the want of soldiers, and also by the want of public lands disposable as fiefs to the nobles or veterans. Seduced by the exemption

[1] "Qua arridente pace et serenitate temporum, plures in gente Northanhumbrorum, tam nobiles quam privati, se suosque liberos, depositis armis, satagunt magis, accepta tonsura, monasterialibus ascribere votis, quam bellicis exercere studiis. Quæ res quem sit habitura finem, posterior ætas videbit."—*Hist.*, v. 23.

[2] See above, p. 75-87.

from taxes, and advantages of every kind with which monastic property was privileged, many of the nobles had obtained from the kings and *witan* vast grants of land in order to found monasteries upon them. Sometimes foundations were actually made, but without any monastic or even Christian charter; the donors collected around them a handful of their own vassals, or of irregular monks who had been expelled from true cloisters; they then called themselves abbots, and lived, together with their wives and children, on the land extorted from the nation, with no care but that of their household and material interest. Sometimes when the grant was obtained it was made use of without any further thought of its pretended purpose, and no pretence of a monastery, even under the ludicrous conditions just described, was made. For this reason the venerable Bede implored the king and bishops to proceed, with the aid of the national assemblies, to the complete abolition of all these fraudulent and scandalous grants.[1]

Ten years after the death of Bede the second Council of Cloveshove[2] acknowledged the justice of the great monk's complaint, but without proposing any effectual remedy for the unfortunate state of affairs which he had pointed out. This

[1] The *Codex Diplomaticus* (No. 46) shows us how King Ina of Wessex took back the lands granted by Cissa to Abbot Hean and his sister the Abbess Cille — "Terram . . . reipublicæ restituit, nondum constructo monasterio in eo, nec ullo admodum oratorio erecto."

[2] See above, p. 152.

Repression of abuses by the Council of Cloveshove.

council enjoined the bishops to visit the monasteries, "if indeed such a name can be given to houses which the tyranny of avarice, to the scandal of the Christian religion, retains in the hands of worldly persons, invested with them not by divine ordinance, but by an invention of human presumption."[1] The object of these pastoral visits was to warn the inmates of the pretended communities of the risks run by their souls, and to provide for the presence of priests in case of any deadly sickness. But nothing indicates that vigorous measures were taken against the odious abuses which produced those so-called monasteries. Ill-considered grants of public lands, to false monks, or, as was much more frequent, to powerful laymen, continued with impunity to the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, causing serious disturbances in the development of the population and the condition of free men, by which the Danish and Norman invasions were facilitated.[2]

But the Council of Cloveshove had other abuses to repress besides those of secular usurpation. The illustrious Boniface, then nearly at the end of his glorious career, and whose vehement remonstrances

[1] "Monasteria, si tamen est fas ea ita nominare, quæ temporibus istis propter vim tyrannicæ quædam avaritiæ ad religionis Christianæ statum nullatenus immutari possent, id est a sæcularibus non divinæ legis ordinatione, sed humanæ adinventionis præsumptione, utcumque tenentur."—Cap. 5.

[2] At this period there scarcely remained perhaps an acre of folc-land that had not been changed into boc-land, under various pretexts.—KEMBLE, *l. c.*

with King Ethelbald and the primate of England had specially procured the convocation of the Council, did not content himself with stigmatising as sacrilegious persons and homicides, the laymen, were they kings or earls, who called themselves abbots of these usurped monasteries.[1] He pointed out to the bishops their own failings, amongst others the national vice of drunkenness, from which even their episcopal dignity did not always protect the Anglo-Saxon bishops;[2] he also pointed out in the very cloisters themselves a culpable luxury and ridiculous abundance of ornament in the vestments of the monks; and represented to them that such childish trifles might be an introduction to excesses much more grave, to bad company, to the abandonment of reading and prayer, and even to debauchery, and the loss of their souls.[3]

[1] "Ille autem qui laicus homo vel imperator, vel rex, vel aliquis, præfectorum vel comitum sæculari potestate fultus, sibi per violentiam rapiat monasterium de potestate episcopi, vel abbatis, vel abbatissæ, et incipiat ipsi vice abbatis regere et habere sub se monachos et pecuniam possidere, quæ fuit Christi sanguine comparata, talem hominem nominant antiqui patres raptorem et sacrilegum et homicidam pauperum et lupum diabolum intrantem in ovile Christi et maximo anathematis vinculo damnandum ante tribunal Christi."—*Epistola ad Cuthbertum*, p. 351, ed. Hussey. No. 70, ed. Jaffé.

[2] "Fertur quoque in parochiis vestris ebrietatis malum nimis adsuetum esse, ut non solum episcopi quidam non prohibeant, sed etiam ipsi nimis bibentes inebrientur, et alios porrectis poculis majoribus cogant ut inebrientur."—*Ibid.*, p. 353.

[3] "Supervacuam et Deo odibilem vestimentorum superstitionem prohibere; quia illa ornamenta vestium . . . latissimis clavis, vermium imaginibus clavata adventum Antichristi . . . præcurrunt; illius calliditate, per ministros suos introducere intra claustra monasteriorum fornicationem et luxuriam clavatorum juvenum, et fœda consortia, et tædium

In accordance with the advice of their illustrious countryman, the twelve bishops assembled at Cloveshove, in council with the King of Mercia and his nobles, forbade monks, and especially nuns, to make any change in their dress, shoes, or headdress, which would assimilate their costume to that of the lay members of society.[1] The same Council forbade them to frequent the houses of secular persons, or to dwell in them;[2] it commanded the abbots and abbesses to neglect no means of preserving in their communities, and the schools attached to them, the love of study and reading, as the best preservative against the vanities and lusts of the world,[3] and to make of their monasteries an asylum for silence, study, prayer, and work.[4] It reproved and forbade the introduction of poets, minstrels, musicians, and clowns into the religious houses: the prolonged visits of secular persons, who were allowed to penetrate

lectionis et orationis, et perditionem animarum." I give in these two latter notes the complete text as given by Spelman in his *Concilia*, p. 259, for the end of this letter, from the word *luxuriam*, is omitted in the editions of Serrarius and Giles. No editor has yet satisfactorily explained what were the *clavi* and *vermes*, the presence of which in the costume of the monks so scandalised Boniface.

[1] "Ut vestibus consuetis, juxta formam priorum . . . deinceps utantur; nec imitentur sæculares in vestitu crurum per fasciolas, nec per coculas in circumdatione capitis modo pallii laïcorum contra morem Ecclesiæ."—Cap. 28.

[2] Cap. 29.

[3] "Ut per familias suas lectionis studium indesinenter in plurimorum pectoribus versetur . . . coerceantur et exerceantur in scholis pueri dilectionem sacræ scientiæ."—Cap. 7.

[4] "Ut sint juxta vocabulum nominis sui, honesta silentium, quietorum atque pro Deo laborantium habitacula . . . orantium, legentium, Deumque laudantium."—Cap. 20.

into and wander about the interior of the cloister; the prolonged and luxurious meals, mingled with buffooneries;[1] and especially that fatal leaning towards drunkenness, which led them not only themselves to drink to excess, but to force their lay companions to drink with them.[2]

The Council concludes this humbling enumeration of the evils which luxury and wealth had introduced into the cloister by a sort of treatise, equally marked by its eloquence and its good sense, against the false ideas which began to be general on the subject of alms, or, in other words, on the moral value of those gifts which constituted the daily increasing wealth of the monasteries. An echo of the generous protest of Bede in his letter to the Archbishop of York is to be found in it.[3] Alms, say the Fathers of the council, when joined to the appointed penance, help in obtaining from God a more prompt remission of sin, and bestowal of grace to prevent backsliding; to those who are not great sinners, it answers the purpose of insuring in heaven the reward due to their innocence and charity. But alms are not given in order that those who receive them may give themselves up to

[1] "Non sint ludicrarum artium receptacula . . . poetarum, citharistarum, musicorum, scurrarum. . . . Non habeant sæculares quique vagandi licentiam . . . per interiora monasterii domuncula."—Cap. 20.

[2] "Ut monasteriales sive ecclesiastici ebrietatis malum non sectentur. . . . Neque alios cogant intemperanter bibere. . . . Sint convivia neque deliciis vel scurrilitatibus mixta . . . et ut . . . potationibus ebriosorum more non serviant."—Cap. 21.

[3] See above, p. 86.

excess in eating and drinking.[1] Nor can any alms which are given with the intention of purchasing greater licence in the future be of any efficacy to redeem even the smallest of sins. Alms are a work of pity. He who has pity in his soul must do his alms at his own expense, and not by robbing his neighbour. To offer to God gifts stained with violence and cruelty, is to irritate instead of appeasing divine justice. For the wise man has said, "To give alms at the expense of the poor, is like killing the son in presence of his father."[2] Even to suppose that Divine justice is venal, is a means of provoking it to strike severely and promptly. The common saying, that certain persons give daily offerings to God in order that they may give themselves up to sin with impunity, is therefore a great mistake. Those who foolishly imagine that the celestial Judge will balance their gifts against their continued crimes are blind indeed. It will be of no use to them to give their goods to God, so long as they give themselves to the devil.[3]

[1] "Non sit quoque eleemosyna illius ad hoc esurienti data, ut se ipsum comessationibus ebrietatibusque illicitis supra modum ingurgitet." —Cap. 26.

[2] "Eleemosyna quæ fit ex substantia pauperum, quasi qui mactat filium in conspectu patris sui."—Eccl. xxxiv. 24.

[3] "Non ad hoc sine dubio dandæ, ut quælibet vel minima saltem peccata eo licentius cuiquam agere liceat, quo vel ipse vel alius quilibet pro eo eleemosynas faciat. . . . Ne per hoc quod venalem Dei justitiam ponat, ab eadem non solum acrius, sed citius juxta merita istius judicetur. Non sint, ut generaliter dicatur, eleemosynæ ad hoc datæ. . . . Frustra suas tantum eleemosynas et non intermixta flagitia supernum pensare judicem cæco suo libitu volunt et optant . . . sua Deo dare videntur, sed se ipsos diabolo per flagitia dare non dubitantur."—Cap. 26.

The Council insists at length upon the necessity of incessant preaching to all, that alms can never take the place of contrition, nor of the canonical penalties imposed for the expiation of sins. It energetically condemns those who hope to acquit themselves of their penances by the intervention of others who shall fast or sing psalms on their account —that is to say, the monks supported by their gifts. It is the flesh which has sinned which ought to be punished. To allow sinners to believe the contrary would be to ruin them by corrupt adulation. For if a man could redeem his faults by money, and satisfy the justice of God by the deeds of another, then justice would indeed be venal, and the rich would be saved more easily than the poor, in defiance of the express words of Scripture. Let no man deceive himself thus, for God deceives no man; and, as has been said by His Apostle, we shall all appear on the same level before the tribunal of Christ.[1]

It is thus evident that the chiefs of the Anglo-Saxon Church, who all came from the monastic order, were the first to protest against false interpretations and evil applications of the doctrine of alms. They protested at the same moment, and

[1] "Ipsa illius caro quæ illicita ac nefanda contraxit desideria, ipsam hic in præsenti punire juxta modum reatus sui debet. . . . De hoc prolixius ideo disputandum est, quia nuper quidam dives, petens reconciliationem pro magno suo facinore . . . quod superni judicis quotidie justitiam inter se quasi venalem statuere. . . . Antequam plures vestra errabunda adulatione implicantur et deducantur ad perniciem."—Cap. 27.

before the event, against the calumnies and exaggerations heaped by an unjust and ungrateful posterity upon the avarice and greed of ecclesiastical corporations and the hypocrisies and evil influence of the cloister.

But the abuses which their watchful and paternal authority thus endeavoured to assail and repress, were without one single exception to be attributed to the relaxation of rule which too much and too sudden wealth had introduced into the monasteries.

And all was not yet said. For this wealth brought with it other dangers besides that of internal laxity. It awakened universal covetousness. Sometimes the natural heirs of the lawful abbot of a monastery came after his death and violently seized the monastic lands, under pretence that the abbey had been the property of the deceased, and that they had a right to its inheritance, on the sole condition of supporting the monks.[1] Sometimes kings and princes installed themselves in a great monastery as in a place of rest and recreation, with all their surroundings, their train of officials, huntsmen, footmen, and grooms, who, along with horses, hawks, and dogs, had to be lodged, fed, and provided with vehicles, as is proved by the char-

[1] Something of a similar character has been seen in the Irish monasteries of the family of St Columbkill, where there were two lines of abbots, the one secular and hereditary, the other ecclesiastical and according to the rule. See vol. iii. page 287.

ters, which, while exempting certain monasteries from this charge, prove how habitual and burdensome it had become.[1] Again, there were other kings still more exacting and formidable, who revoked the gifts made by their predecessors, and reclaimed the lands given by them; setting forth their pretensions and the counter-plea of the monks before the Witenagemot, the decisions of which were not always in conformity with the rights of the weak. The nobles and great personages, too, often followed the example of the kings—they reclaimed the lands given to the monasteries by their fathers, or seized upon others which lay at hand, leaving traces of their depredations in the many acts which enforce restitution more or less tardy, but at the same time proving that violence and rapacity had too often the advantage over the pious munificence of former benefactors.

Sometimes the prelates themselves abused their authority by making over to their relatives a portion of the conventual patrimony. In short, the local and intestinal wars which were so frequent at this period were waged specially at the expense of the monastic lands,[2] which were always the best cultivated and the most populous, and consequently offered a richer and more attractive prey to the

[1] "Pastus regum et principum, ducum et præfectorum, exactorum, equorum et falconum, accipitrum et canum . . . et omnes difficultates regalis vel sæcularis servitii."—*Codex Diplom.*, n. 288.

[2] All these causes of the ruin or deterioration of monastic property are well explained by Lingard, *Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 226 and 253-256.

spoiler. This fact explains the singular fluctuations of prosperity to which the monasteries were subject, though their perseverance, their laborious and economical system, their paternal care of the agricultural population, were almost always sufficient to restore their impaired fortunes. The twice-repeated accusation of St Boniface, when, in his letters to King Ethelbald and the Archbishop of Canterbury, he distinguishes England as the country in which the monks were subjected to the harshest bondage, on account of the exactions and forced labour required from them by the royal officials for public buildings, is much less comprehensible. He speaks of these oppressions as of a novelty unknown under the ancient kings, and in the other countries of Christendom; no trace of them is to be found in contemporary documents; but the evidence of the great Boniface, so attentive an observer of everything that concerned the Church in his native country, is too grave to be set altogether aside.[1]

Property has been in England, as elsewhere, the condition and guarantee of freedom for the Church as well as for corporations and individuals. But

[1] "Dicitur quod præfecti et comites tui majorem violentiam et servitutem monachis et sacerdotibus irrogent, quam cæteri ante Christiani reges fecissent."—*Epist. ad Ethelbaldum*, No. 59. "De violenta quoque monachorum servitute, operibus et ædificiis regalibus, quæ in toto mundo Christianorum non auditur facta, nisi tantum in genere Anglorum: quod sacerdotibus Dei non tacendum nec consentiendum est, quod inauditum malum est præteritis seculis."—*Epist. ad Cuthbertum*, No. 70, ed. Jaffé.

the burdens, the abuses, the excesses, the privileges which property brings with it, have been in England more than anywhere else, and at all periods, the great danger of the Church, and it is upon this rock that the monastic ark has perished, drawing with it in its shipwreck the whole Catholic Church of England. In this lies a terrible mystery, a problem of which our fathers did not sufficiently understand the gravity and difficulty. To solve it would have demanded from the heads of the Church, and especially of the religious orders, an amount of discernment, moderation, and prudence, easier to dream of than to find. But the reaction which raised up the holy founders of mendicant orders, and which always burns in some souls, enamoured of the primitive but transitory simplicity of the great cenobitical foundations, is but too easily imaginable. "My brethren," said the greatest monk of our century, preaching at the inauguration of one of his new establishments—"my brethren, if I knew that our house would grow rich, even by your savings, I should rise to-night and set fire to it, at its four corners."

## V.

Fatal wealth! let us repeat with this great man —fatal wealth, the daughter of charity, of faith, of a generous and spontaneous virtue, but the mother of covetousness, envy, robbery, and ruin! Scarcely a

century had run since the modest and sober beginning of the Church and the monastic order in England—and already the honourable and undisputed voices of saints, such as Boniface and Bede, are raised to indicate the danger, though without perceiving its cause. The leprosy was already there. In the fulness of youth, at the height of health, the germ of mortality appeared. The day was to come when the poisonous fruit should be gathered by greedy and bloody hands. The day was to come when a monster, who resembled at once Caligula and Heliogabalus, a Henry VIII., with his cowardly courtiers and debased people, should arm himself with the pretext of the exorbitant wealth of religious corporations in order to annihilate, and drown in blood and slavery, the work of Augustin, Wilfrid, and Bede.

I think I have a right to despise the insinuations of those who have dared to accuse me of desiring to absolve or mitigate the crime of those sacrilegious bandits—those cowardly spoilers who, in England as in all the rest of Europe, have made a prey of the patrimony of the Church. But who will not regret with me that the Church, which alone had the necessary discernment and authority, should not herself have set limits, at a suitable moment, to the unlimited increase of wealth in the monastic corporations? The increase was lawful, natural, often even involuntary, but dangerous and exorbitant. The Church could and ought to have under-

stood this. The Church, with her supernatural insight, her divine authority, her maternal omnipotence, could and ought to have forestalled the danger by warning prohibitions, by a just division of the superfluities of great orders and rich communities, either to the advantage of the poor, of public beneficence, of the inferior and neglected clergy, or any other social service or necessity.

No man can say from what evils and crimes the world might have been spared if the Church, which was destined to be the chief victim, had been beforehand with the spoilers; had baffled their hatred and disarmed their treachery by taking from them this specious pretext; arresting with a prudent and steady hand the rising tide of ecclesiastical wealth, and saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."[1]

Disinterestedness is, above all others, the virtue of a priest; voluntary poverty has always been the unfailing source of the influence and power of monks. In this they have always been able—they will always be able—to renew and revive their strength. It was this thought that comforted the great soul of Mabillon, the most illustrious of modern Benedictines, in those generous lamentations which dropped from his pen after the narrative of the conquest of England by the monks, and which may still be applied to so many other Catholic

[1] Job xxxviii. 11.

countries which the scythe of Vandalism had not yet assailed in his day :—

"Ah! if Gregory or Augustin could but live again, and see these lands to-day! What a sad glance would they throw upon the fruits of their wasted labours, the scattered stones of the sanctuary, the house of prayer changed into the abode of desolation! It is not that we weep the lost wealth of the Church ; it is not our sacked and overthrown monasteries that the Benedictines regret. No ; but we groan over the fate of our brethren, rent from the bosom of the Catholic Church and rooted in heresy. God grant that we might buy their return by the price of all that might once have been ours. What would not the Church give, what would not our order sacrifice, to gain the souls of our brethren, and enrich ourselves in the poverty of Christ!"[1]

It was from the Benedictine ranks, purified by toil and a frugal life, or from the bosom of other orders given by God to the Church to defend and console her, that the new missionaries came who, in the age of Mabillon, returned upon English soil, a

[1] "Ah ! si modo in illas terras redivivi venirent Gregorius et Augustinus ! quibus oculis intuerentur laborum suorum fructus dissipatos, dispersos lapides sanctuarii, et domos orationis factas domos desolationis ! Neque vero lugemus amissas illic Ecclesiæ amplissimas opes . . . neque nos Benedictini jam dolemus monasteria nostra direpta et eversa ; sed ingemiscimus, quod fratres nostros a gremio Ecclesiæ Catholicæ avulsos et in schismate obfirmatos videamus. Utinam cessione omnium rerum, olim nostrarum, eos ad nos redituros comparare nobis liceret ! Quidni Ecclesia, quidni ordo noster ultro cederet bonis, olim suis, ad lucrandos fratres, cum Christus propter nos egenus factus sit, ut nos ejus inopia ditaremur !"—*Ann. Bened.*, l. ix. c. 44.

thousand years after the companions of Augustin and the disciples of Columba. Far from being received, as their predecessors had been by the Anglo-Saxon pagans, with magnanimous and intelligent tolerance, they had nothing to expect of the Protestant English but martyrdom, often preceded by the horrors of a lengthened captivity, and by tortures unknown to savages. Nevertheless, daily some monk crossed the sea, and landed disguised and by night upon the soil where Augustin and the monks of Mont Cœlius had planted in broad day the cross of Jesus Christ, now banished and denied by Christian England. Not far from the old wasted and confiscated monasteries, he began, at the risk of his life, the clandestine practice of that worship which the envoys of Gregory the Great had openly celebrated; he distributed the bread of life and truth to some sheep of the little flock which had survived persecutions more atrocious and prolonged than those of Decius or Diocletian, to keep and transmit to our free and happier days the yet warm ashes of the truth. They came from France, they came from Belgium, Italy, and even from Spain, to gather these bloody laurels, striving for them with exiles of the English race. They were discovered, questioned, tortured, and then murdered, with all the refinements of infernal cruelty. Among many others, let us name a Spaniard, George Gervaise, who, captured and questioned by the judges of Mary Stuart's miserable son upon his profession,

A Spanish Benedictine martyred by the English in 1608.

answered, "I am a Benedictine monk, of that order which of old converted England to the Christian faith." He renewed this profession at the foot of the gibbet on which he was hung, and from which he was taken down before he had yielded his last breath that his side might be opened, his heart torn out, and his feet cut off, in order to teach foreign monks who should venture to intrude on English soil, what sufferings should prevent their return to their native country.[1] "But," says the Spanish Benedictine who has added this tale to the glorious annals of his order, "what heart among us does not feel itself inspired by this example to suffer for Christ, and to repeat the sacred text, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who carry good tidings, who publish peace.' Besides," continues the Castilian annalist, "if there is any undertaking which belongs above others to the order of St Benedict, it is the mission to England, for our fathers conquered that island to Christ by their preaching and by their blood. They possessed there a crowd of monasteries, illustrious among the most illustrious in Europe. When generals and captains in arms desire to animate their soldiers for the battle, they remind them of their past exploits, of their victories, of the glory of their nation, the safety and honour of their wives and children. It

[1] "Como amenaçando a los monges de España que no passen a aquella isla; por que ellos padeceran los mismos tormentos y no tendran pies para bolver a su tierra."—YEPES, *Coronica General de S. Benito*, 1609, vol. i. p. 448.

seems to me that our father Benedict, from the height of heaven, speaks thus to his monks. He reminds them that England was brought within the pale of the Church by St Gregory and the monk-apostles of that island. He commands the monks of all his congregations to return there for the honour of religion, that the faith planted by the hands of his sons may not be brought to nothing; not to forget how many souls sigh after religious life; and to carry help to our mother, the holy Church, so cruelly persecuted by heresy."[1]

But let us turn our saddened eyes away from that terrible future, so different, and still so distant, from the time of which we have just spoken. Notwithstanding the dangers and abuses which, in the interests of truth, must be acknowledged to have existed from the beginning of monastic missions, long centuries of faith and fervour, of union with the Roman Church and Catholic Christendom, succeeded the beautiful beginning of converted England. Abundant harvests were produced during these centuries in the furrows ploughed by the disciples of Augustin and Bede. Before it settled into the great nation which the world admires and envies, furnished with the noblest and wisest institutions that men have ever known, with a literature rich in unrivalled genius, and power greater than that of ancient Rome, England had

[1] YEPES, *l. c.*

to become the great base of operation for the spiritual conquests of the Papacy, the great centre of Christian missions. By her the Roman Church moved, enlightened, and subdued the centre and north of Europe; and it was by her means that the German and Scandinavian peoples, still plunged in the darkness of heathenism, were brought into the Christian faith.

The first-fruits of the monastic seed sown by the hand of the great monk Gregory in the bosom of the Anglo-Saxon race, was the great apostle and martyr Winifrid, whose Latin name, *Bonifacius*, the benefactor, so exactly expressed his glorious career. It was he who was chosen by God to carry the light of truth, the flame of love, the spirit of martyrdom, into the cradle of his ancestors, the depths of those German forests, happily impenetrable by the enslaved Romans, from whence came the freedom, thought, and life of Catholic nations, and with these the Christian civilisation of two worlds.

# BOOK XV.

## THE ANGLO-SAXON NUNS.

"Quali colombe dal disio chiamate
Con l'ali aperte e ferme al dolce nido
Volan, per l'aer dal voler portate."

DANTE, *Inferno*, c. 5.

"Indi, como orologio che ne chiami
Nell' ora che la sposa di Dio surge
A mattinar lo sposo, perchè l'ami,
Che l'una parte e l'altra tira ed urge
Tin tin sonando con si doce nota
Che 'l ben disposto spirto d'amor turge;
Cosi vid' io la gloriosa ruota
Moversi e render voce a voce in tempra
Ed in dolezza ch' esser non può nota
Se non colà dove 'l gioir s'insempra."

*Paradiso*, c. 10.

"Come, pensive nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure."

MILTON, *Penseroso*.

# BOOK XV.

## I.

Convents of women as numerous and important as the monasteries of men.—Important position of women among the Teutonic races.—Contrast with the Romans of the Empire.—Among the Anglo-Saxons, descendants of the Cimbri, the influence of women even greater and happier than in other nations.—Importance of dynastic alliances.—Anglo-Saxon queens.

The Teutonic barbarians, though less corrupt than the Romans, nevertheless required an immense effort of the Christian apostles to conquer their sensual excesses.—The debt owed by women to Christianity.—The Church could only emancipate woman by the ideal of Christian virginity.—This virginity nowhere more honoured than among the Anglo-Saxons.—Influence and authority of abbesses. They appear in the national councils.—Ceremonial of the solemn benediction of a nun.

## II.

Anglo-Saxon queens and princesses in the cloister.—The first nuns trained in France, at Faremoutier, Jouarre, and Chelles.—Saint Botulph and the two East Anglian princesses at Chelles.

Each dynasty of the Heptarchy supplies its share of virgins, wives, and widows.

The Northumbrian nuns already well known, except Bega.—Legend of this princess, an Irishwoman by birth.—Perpetual confusion of history and tradition.

The *Ascings* or princesses of the Kentish dynasty.—Ethelburga, Queen of Northumbria, afterwards foundress of Lyminge.—Her sister Eadburga, and her niece Eanswida, foundress of Folkestone.—The legend of Domneva and her brothers.—The hind's run in the Isle of Thanet.—Great popularity of St Mildred.—Legend of the box on the ear.—Mildred's sisters.—Milburga and the dead child.

The Mercian princesses.—The race of the cruel Penda furnished the greatest number of saints and nuns.—Three of his daughters nuns, and four of his granddaughters saints.

The *Uffings* of East Anglia.—The three daughters of King Anna who fell in battle.—Withburga and her community fed on hind's milk.—Three generations of saints of the race of Odin at Ely, which had for its three first abbesses a Queen of Northumbria, a Queen of Kent,

and a Queen of Mercia.—Wereburga, the fourth sainted Abbess of Ely, and the shepherd of Weedon.

Nuns of the race of Cerdic in Wessex; the wife and sisters of King Ina.—St Cuthburga, foundress of Winbourne.—The monastery of Frideswida, a West Saxon princess is the cradle of the University of Oxford: the kiss of the leper.

III.

Literary, biblical, and classical studies among the Anglo-Saxon nuns—chiefly at Barking, under Abbess Hildelida. St Aldhelm addresses to them his *Eulogy of Virginity;* his letters to other nuns.—Winbourne, another centre of intellectual activity.—Abbess Tetta and her five hundred nuns; the novices dance on the tomb of their mistress.

IV.

Winbourne, a double monastery.—Origin of these singular institutions.—They flourished chiefly in the Irish colonies in Gaul: from thence introduced into England.—A monastery of men joined to every great abbey of women, and always governed by the abbess.—Interdicted by Archbishop Theodore.—The double monasteries disappeared after the Danish invasion; resemblance to the boys' schools managed by young girls in the United States.—In the seventh and eighth centuries no disorders are remarked in them except at Coldingham.—What were the abuses of the Anglo-Saxon cloisters.—Splendour of dress; attempts upon the modesty of the nuns, foreseen and punished by Anglo-Saxon legislation.—Decrees of Archbishop Theodore and Egbert against the criminal relations of the clergy with nuns; their importance should not be exaggerated.

V.

The letters of St Boniface contain the surest accounts of the state of souls in the Anglo-Saxon cloisters.—All there was not calm and happiness.—Tender and impassioned character of the letters addressed by the nuns to Boniface and his companions.—The not less affectionate answers of the missionaries.—The three Buggas and the two Eadburgas.—Earnest desire to make pilgrimages to Rome.—Grievances of the Abbess Eangytha and her daughter.—How St Lioba became connected with St Boniface.—Other letters written to the saint by his friends: Cena, Egburga.—Lamentation of a nun for the absence of her brother.

VI.

Excesses of feeling vanish before death, but death itself does not put an end to the sweet friendships of the cloister.—St Galla.—Hilda and her friend; Ethelburga and her friend; the daughters of Earl Puch.

—Visions of light.—The daughter of the King of Kent and the lay sister at Faremoutier.—The shining shroud at Barking; the extinguished lamp.

VII.

History has preserved only these names, but many others have disappeared after glorifying the Church and their country.—Masculine character of these Anglo-Saxon nuns: the monastic ideal unites the types of man, woman, and child.

Conclusion.—The whole ancient Catholic world has perished except the army of sacrifice.—Number and endurance of contemporary vocations.

## I.

"Hark how I'll bribe you: . . .
Ay, with such gifts that heaven shall share with you;
. . . With true prayers
That shall be up at heaven and enter there
Ere sunrise—prayers from preserved souls,
From fasting maids, whose minds are dedicate
To nothing temporal."

SHAKESPEARE, *Measure for Measure.*

I HAD supposed my task at an end; but I hear the sound as of a choir of sweet and pure voices which seem to reproach me for having left in the shade one side of the great edifice which I have undertaken to reconstruct in thought. These voices have no plaintive sound. But they are full of a soft and overpowering harmony which has not been sufficiently celebrated before men. The souls whose sentiments they utter do not complain of being forgotten; it is their chosen condition and desire. They have made greater sacrifices than that of a place in the memory of men. Strength, veiled by gentleness, is in their very breath. Their appearance in history is characterised by something clear and firm, sober yet animated, as well as

by that sacrifice of life in its flower, which is of all things in the world the most touching. These are the daughters of the Anglo-Saxon kings and lords, and with them, a true nation of virgins, voluntary prisoners of the love of God,[1] and consecrated to monastic life in cloisters which rival in number and influence the monasteries of men, the most important centres of Christian life.

We have already seen how, outside their communities, and mingled in the current of the historical events of their time, several of those vigorous women, those wise virgins and spiritual warriors, have left their trace in the history of their country. But such isolated figures do not suffice for an attentive study of the state of souls and things in times so distant. Account must be made of other personages of the same order, and above all as much as is possible of the feminine army which is arrayed by the side of those queens and princesses. The crowd must be penetrated in any attempt to trace this fruitful and powerful branch of the monastic family, and in default of exact and precise details, which are rarely to be found, an effort, at least, must be made to seize the salient points, and to bring out such features of their life as may touch or enlighten posterity.

And, in the first place, to give any exact representation of the Anglo-Saxon nuns as they ap-

[1] "That voluntary prison into which they threw themselves for the love of God."—BOSSUET, *Exorde du Sermon sur Jesus Christ comme Sujet de Scandale.*

peared in their own consciousness and to the eyes of their countrymen, the important part played by women among the Teutonic races must be borne in mind. Nothing had more astonished the Romans than the austere chastity of the German women ;[1] the religious respect of the men for the partners of their labours and dangers, in peace as well as in war ; and the almost divine honours with which they surrounded the priestesses or prophetesses, who sometimes presided at their religious rites, and sometimes led them to combat against the violators of the national soil.[2] When the Roman world, undermined by corruption and imperial despotism, fell to pieces like the arch of a *cloaca*, there is no better indication of the difference between the debased subjects of the empire and their conquerors, than that sanctity of conjugal and domestic ties, that energetic family feeling, that worship of pure blood, which are founded upon the dignity of woman, and respect for her modesty, no less than upon the proud independence of man and the consciousness of personal dignity. It is by this special quality that the barbarians showed themselves worthy of instilling a new life into the West, and becoming

Great part played by women among the Teutonic races.

[1] "Severa illic matrimonia : nec ullam morum partem magis laudaveris. . . . Ne se mulier extra virtutum cogitationes, extraque bellorum casus putet, ipsis incipientis matrimonii auspiciis admonetur, venire se laborum periculorumque sociam, idem in pace, idem in prælio passuram ausuramque. . . . Paucissima in tam numerosa gente adulteria." —TACIT., *De Mor. German.*, c. 18, 19.

[2] *Ibid.*, c. 8. Cf. CÆSAR, *De Bell. Gall.*, i. 50, 51.

the forerunners of the new and Christian nations to which we all owe our birth.

Especially among the Anglo-Saxon descendants of the Cimbri.

Who does not recall those Cimbri whom Marius had so much trouble in conquering, and whose women rivalled the men in boldness and heroism? Those women, who had followed their husbands to the war, gave to the Romans a lesson in modesty and greatness of soul of which the future tools of the tyrants and the Cæsars were not worthy. They would surrender only on the promise of the consul that their honour should be protected, and that they should be given as slaves to the vestals, thus putting themselves under the protection of those whom they believed virgins and priestesses. The great beginner of democratic Dictatorship refused: upon which they killed themselves and their children, generously preferring death to shame.[1] The Anglo-Saxons came from the same districts bathed by the waters of the Northern Sea, which had been inhabited by the Cimbri,[2] and showed themselves worthy of descent from them, as much by the irresistible onslaught of their warriors, as by the indisputable power of their women. No trace of the old Roman spirit which put a wife *in manu*, in the hand of her husband, that is to say, under his feet, is to be found among them. Woman is a person

[1] Florus, l. iii. c. 3.

[2] "Proximi Oceano Cimbri tenent, parva nunc civitas, sed gloria ingens."—*De Moribus German.*, c. 37. Jutland, Schleswig, and Holstein, from whence came the Jutes, Angles, and Saxons, bore the name of the Cimbric Chersonese.

and not a thing. She lives, she speaks, she acts for herself, guaranteed against the least outrage by severe penalties, and protected by universal respect. She inherits, she disposes of her possessions —sometimes even she deliberates, she fights, she governs, like the most proud and powerful of men.[1] The influence of women has been nowhere more effectual, more fully recognised, or more enduring than among the Anglo-Saxons, and nowhere was it more legitimate or more happy.

From the beginning of Christianity, women everywhere became, as has been seen at every page of this narrative, the active and persevering, as well as daring and unwearied assistants of the Christian apostles; and when the conversion of the race was complete, no Fredigond appeared, as among the Gallo-Franks, to renew the evil behaviour of the Roman empresses. If there existed among these queens and princesses certain violent and cruel souls, there was not one who could be accused of loose morals or immodest inclinations. The national legend is here in perfect accord with the monastic, and popular tradition with history. From the beautiful Rowena, sister of the first conqueror Hengist, to the famous Countess Godiva—

[1] In this respect there was no difference between the victors and the vanquished. Women had always occupied an important place among the Britons, and often reigned and fought at their head; witness Boadicea immortalised by Tacitus. Free women, married and possessing five acres of land, voted in the public assemblies of the *clans* or tribes of Britain.—*Ancient Laws of Cambria*—ap. PALGRAVE and LAPPENBERG.

from the daughter of Ethelbert, who carried the faith into Northumbria, to the wife of Ina, who procured the conversion of her husband—we encounter, with few exceptions, only attractive and generous figures, in whom beauty and modesty meet together, and the gentleness natural to woman is allied with an energy which reaches heroism.

From this fact arises the extreme importance attached by the Anglo-Saxons to matrimonial alliances which united among themselves the various sovereign dynasties, and the nations or tribes whose local independence and glorious recollections were personified by them. These unions, by renewing periodically the ties of a common nationality, gave to the princesses of the race of Odin the office of mediatrix and peacemaker to a degree which justifies the touching surname given to woman in the primitive poetry of the Anglo-Saxons, where she is described as *freodowebbe*, she who weaves the links of peace.[1]

Thence, too, arose the great position held by the queens in all the states of the Anglo-Saxon confederation. Possessing a court, legal jurisdiction, and territorial revenue on her own account,[2] surrounded with the same homage, sometimes invested with the same rights and authority as the sovereign, his wife took her place by his side in the political and religious assemblies, and her signature ap-

[1] *Beowulf*, verse 3880.
[2] LAPPENBERG, vol. i. p. 564.

peared in acts of foundation, in the decrees of the councils and in the charters, sometimes followed by those of the king's sisters, or other princesses of the royal house. Sometimes these royal ladies, associated, as they were among the Teutons of whom Tacitus speaks, in all their husband's cares, labours, and dangers, gave all their efforts, like Ermenilda of Mercia, to the conversion of a still heathen kingdom;[1] sometimes, like Sexburga in Wessex, they exercised the regency with full royal authority, and almost manly vigour.[2] There is no instance of a woman reigning alone by hereditary right or by election. But the mysterious act which ended the days of the Northumbrian Osthryda,[3] Queen of the Mercians, reminds us that we are in the country where Mary Stuart, the first who ever lost a crowned head on a scaffold, was to prove that women were there destined to all the greatness and all the calamities of supreme power.

At the same time it would be a strange delusion to suppose that the traditional respect shown by

[1] See above, vol. iv. p. 191.

[2] Sexburga, widow of the King of Wessex, Kinewalk, was made Queen-Regent by her husband at his death in 673. "Nec deerat mulieri spiritus ad obeunda regni munia. Ipsa novos exercitus moliri, veteres tenere in officio, ipsa subjectos clementer moderari, hostibus minaciter infremere, prorsus omnia facere, ut nihil præter sexum discerneres. Verumtamen plus quam femineos animos anhelantem vita destituit, vix annus potestate perfunctam."—GUILL. MALMESB., i. 32; RIC. CIRENC., ii. 40.

[3] "A suis, id est Merciorum primatibus, interempta."—BEDE, v. 24. "Crudeliter necaverunt."—MATTH. WESTMONAST., ad. ann. 696. See in vol. iv. p. 123, 309, 319, what we have said of her, and her devotion to her uncle, St Oswald, and her husband Ethelred, the friend of Wilfrid, who abdicated to become a monk at Bardeney.

the Teutonic races to woman, or to certain women, was sufficiently strong or universal to restrain all the excesses of the most formidable passion and most imperious instinct of fallen humanity, among the Anglo-Saxons. Of all the victories of Christianity there is none more salutary and more necessary, and at the same time none more hardly and painfully won, than that which it has gained, gained alone and everywhere, though with a daily renewed struggle, over the unregulated inclinations which stain and poison the fountains of life. Its divinity here shows itself by a triumph which no rival philosophy, no adverse doctrine, has ever equalled, or will ever aspire to equal. No doubt the barbarians, according to the testimony of the Fathers, were more chaste than the Romans of the Empire. To succeed in introducing a respect for modesty and priestly celibacy in the midst of the corruptions of imperial Rome—to raise in the midst of the universal debasement the type of virginity consecrated to God—religion needed an amount of strength, majesty, and constancy, which the terrible wrestle maintained for three centuries could alone have given to it.

Neither was it a brief or easy enterprise to offer and place the yoke of continence upon the shoulders of a barbarous race, in proportion as they seized their prey, and established themselves as masters of the future. It was a glorious and painful task to struggle day by day in that ter-

rible confusion, in the desperate obscurity of the tempest, against an innumerable band of victors, inflamed by all the lusts of strength and conquest, and poisoned even by contact with their victims. The struggle was long, glorious, difficult, and triumphant. It was no longer the unnatural debauchery and monstrous orgies of the Roman empire which had to be denounced; but there remained the vile and gross inclinations, the brutally disordered appetites of human and savage nature. There are excesses and crimes which, though not set forth in the pages of Petronius and Suetonius, though seen only in glimpses through the articles of a penitentiary, the canons of a council, the mutilated text of a legend or chronicle, reveal no less gulfs of shame and sorrow. The Teutons were more respectful than the Orientals or Romans to those women whom they considered their own equals or superiors; but who shall say what was the fate of those of inferior condition, and especially of the unfortunates hidden in the dreary darkness of slavery or serfdom? Who shall say what were the sublime and for ever unknown efforts which were made by the priests of a God of purity to wrest so many young captives, so many slave or serf girls, from the harems of princes, from the pitiless passion of victorious warriors, and the tyrannical caprices of their masters? God alone knows these efforts, God alone has rewarded them. Attentive and sincere history

can but note the general result, which was immense and glorious.

Christian civilisation has triumphed, and its triumph rests, above all, upon respect for the wife, virgin, and mother—that transfigured woman of whom the mother of God has become the type and guardian in Christian nations.[1]

It is Christianity which has armed woman with her own weakness, and made of it her strength—a strength more august and respected than any other: "when I am weak, then am I strong." The Christian religion has been the true country of woman; the only one in which she has found her true freedom, her true destiny, coming out of Egyptian bondage, escaping from paganism, from savage life, or from the still more shameful debasement of civilised depravity. This also, and this alone, could give a free field to all the virtues which are characteristically her own, those which make her not only equal, but often superior to man—generosity, the heroism of patience and self-devotion, suffering accepted for the help of others, victory over selfishness, and the sacrifice of pride to love. This work of atonement and salvation, which is the only true emancipation of woman, and, by her, of virtue and the soul, has been the work of the Church with the aid of the Teutonic race.

And the Church has done this work only by elevating above and beyond the level of virtue, which

[1] See *L'Histoire de Sainte Elisabeth*, Introduction, p. 76, 134.

women in general can reach, that ideal of moral virtue and beauty which can be realised only by virginity consecrated to God. She has raised this ideal above the virtues most admired and most worthy to be admired among the ancient nations, even among the Jews, where fruitfulness was a woman's supreme glory. She has given embodiment, discipline, law, a soul, an inextinguishable light, to the confused notions spread throughout antiquity; she has transformed into a splendid and immortal army those little groups of vestals, sibyls, and Druidesses, which were scattered through the heathen world. Respect for modesty, which among the most generous nations was the privilege of a small and chosen number, she has brought to be the inviolable inheritance of every human creature: at the same time she has made the privileged state of virginity consecrated to God to be the common dowry of Christendom, the lawful and supreme ambition of the poorest child of the people, as well as of the daughter of kings; and for eighteen centuries she has drawn from all countries and conditions, myriads of chaste and radiant creatures, who have rushed to her altars, bringing their heart and life to God who became man in order to redeem them.

No people honours virginity more than the Anglo-Saxons.

Our Anglo-Saxons were neither the last nor the least instruments of this glorious transformation. Amid all the overflowings of their natural intemperance, they had preserved the instinct and a sense

of the necessity of veneration for things above: they could, at least, honour the virtues which they would not or could not practise. The spectator stands amazed at the crowd of neophytes of both sexes who came from all the races of the Heptarchy, to vow themselves to perpetual continence. None of the new Christian nations seem to have furnished so great a number; and among none does Christian virginity seem to have exercised so prompt and so supreme an influence. The young Anglo-Saxon women who gave themselves to God, though they were initiated into the life of the cloister in the Gallo-Frankish monasteries, which had the advantage of being sooner established than those of England, had to return to their own island to realise their own value in the eyes of their countrymen.

The Anglo-Saxon conquerors regarded with tender and astonished respect the noble daughters of their race, who appeared to them surrounded by an unknown, a supernatural grandeur, and power at once human and divine—victorious over all the passions, all the weaknesses and lusts, of which victory had but developed the germs. This respect soon became apparent in the national laws, which agreed in placing under the safeguard of severe penalties the honour and freedom of those upon whom Anglo-Saxon legislation bestowed the title of *brides of the Lord* and *spouses of God.*[1]

[1] "*Godes bryde.*"—THORPE'S *Ancient Laws of England*, vol. ii. p. 188, 206, 207.

Influence and authority of the abbesses.

When one of these holy maidens found herself invested, by the choice of her companions, or the nomination of a bishop, with the right of governing and representing a numerous community of her companions, the chiefs and people of the Heptarchy accorded her, without hesitation, all the liberties and attributes of the most elevated rank. The abbesses, as we have seen by the example of Hilda, Ebba, and Elfleda, had soon an influence and authority which rivalled that of the most venerated bishops and abbots. They had often the retinue and state of princesses, especially when they came of royal blood. They treated with kings, bishops, and the greatest lords on terms of perfect equality; and as the rule of the cloister does not seem to have existed for them, they are to be seen going where they please,[1] present at all great religious and national solemnities, at the dedication of churches, and even, like the queens, taking part in the deliberations of the national assemblies, and affixing their signatures to the charters therein granted. The twenty-third article of the famous law or *dooms* of Ina sets, in certain points, not only abbots, but abbesses on the same level with kings and the greatest personages of the country.[2] In the Council of Beccancelde, held in

[1] The reader may remember the meeting appointed by the Abbess Elfleda of Whitby with St Cuthbert at Coquet Island, and also the festival to which she invited the same bishop on the dedication of a church built on one of her estates. See vol. iv. p. 299, 411.

[2] "Si homo alienigena occidatur, habeat rex duas partes *were* suæ et

694 by the bishop and king of Kent, the signatures of five abbesses appear in the midst of those of the bishops, affixed to decrees intended to guarantee the inviolability of the property and freedom of the Church.[1]

How were the monasteries filled whose superiors occupied so elevated a rank in the spiritual and temporal hierarchy of the Anglo-Saxons, and what was their life? This question it will be both important and difficult to answer.

No contemporary writer has left us a complete authentic picture of the interior of the great Anglo-Saxon communities. No indisputable document is in existence which brings before us the system of

terciam partem habeant filii vel parentes sui. Si parentes non habeat, dimidiam habeat rex, dimidiam consocii. Si autem abbas *vel abbatissa* intersit, dividant eodem modo cum rege."—THORPE'S *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, p. 471-500, fol. ed.

[1] This is the council mentioned above, p. 149, and which is also known under the names of Bapchild and Beckenham: the king who presided at it, Withred, reigned thirty-three years. The decrees were given by the votes of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Rochester, "cum abbatibus, *abbatissis*, presbyteris, diaconibus, ducibus, et satrapis."—WILKINS, *Concilia*, i. p. 47. In Coletti, vol. viii. p. 79, there are five signatures of abbesses:—

Signum manus: Mildredæ, abbatissæ.
,, ,, Etheldridæ, abbatissæ.
,, ,, Aetæ, abbatissæ.
,, ,, Wilnodæ, abbatissæ.
,, ,, Hereswidæ, abbatissæ.

The other signatures are those of the king and queen Werburga for their infant son, afterwards of two princes or lay lords, of the archbishop, the two bishops, and seven priests; there are no abbots. Kemble, vol. ii. p. 198, maintains that all signatures of women, other than queens, which are found attached to certain rare charters, must be those of abbesses summoned to attend assemblies where there might be question of the interests of their communities. Lingard (vol. i. p. 239) is more sceptical on this subject.

rules and customs followed by thousands of nuns who wore the black robe and veil of the spouses of the Lord. We are reduced to the scanty incidents which are to be found in the history of the time, in that of the reigning families from which came most of the principal abbesses, and specially from the biographies of the most holy or most celebrated among these illustrious women. But by contrasting these incidents with those which reveal to us the origin and result of similar vocations among all the other Christian nations, by lighting them up with the light which shines in history, from the commencement of Christianity, we arrive at a point of comprehension perhaps satisfactory enough, but with which at least we must content ourselves.

In the absence of any existing record of their special rules and customs, the liturgical remains of the Anglo-Saxon Church reveal to us the spirit which animated both the pontiffs, and the novices by whom these great and frequent sacrifices were made. There, as everywhere else, under the ancient discipline, it was the bishop, and he alone, who had the right of receiving the final vows of the virgin and of consecrating her solemnly to God. Although the Irish, with their habitual rashness, permitted girls to take the veil at the age of twelve,[1] the Anglo-Saxon Church forbade the taking of the irrevocable vows until after the twenty-

[1] MARTENE, *De Antiquis Ecclesiæ Ritibus*, lib. ii. c. 6, vol. iii. p. 109.

fifth year had been accomplished, in accordance with a custom which began to prevail in the whole Church, and which was a modification of the decrees of the Pope St Leo and the Emperor Majorian, who had deferred to the age of forty the reception of the solemn benediction. On the day fixed for that ceremony, which took place only at the principal festivals of the year, and in presence of a numerous assemblage, the bishop began by blessing the black robe which was henceforward to be the sole adornment of the bride of God. The novice put it on in a private room,[1] from which she came forth, thus clothed, and was led to the foot of the altar, after the reading of the Gospel; the officiating bishop having already begun to say mass. There she listened to his exhortation; after which he asked for two public engagements which were indispensable to the validity of the act: in the first place, the consent of the parents and other guardians of the novice; and in the second place, her own promise of obedience to himself and his successors. When this had been done he laid his hands upon her to bless her and consecrate her to the God whom she had chosen. The Pontifical of Egbert, Archbishop of York, and an Anglo-Saxon manuscript found in the Norman abbey of Jumiéges, have preserved to us the prayers used by the bishop at this supreme moment. The

Ceremony used at the solemn benediction of an Anglo-Saxon nun.

[1] "De papilione aut loco ubi benedictas vestes induerant, accersebantur per archipresbyterum virgines consecrandæ."

maternal tenderness of the Church overflows in them with a fulness and majesty which recalls the *Menées* of the Greek Church to such a degree, that it might he supposed old Archbishop Theodore, the contemporary of Egbert's most illustrious predecessor, had brought from the depth of Asia Minor into the Northumbrian capital this ardent breath of Oriental inspiration.

"May God bless thee, God the creator of heaven and earth, the Father all-powerful, who has chosen thee as He chose St Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, to preserve thy virginity entire and spotless, as thou hast promised before God and the angels. Persevere then in thy resolutions and keep thy chastity with patience, that thou mayest be worthy of the virgin's crown.

"May God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit bless thee with all blessings, that thou mayest remain immaculate and perfect under the robe of St Mary, the mother of Christ. May the Spirit of God, the Spirit of wisdom and strength, of knowledge and piety, rest upon thee and fill thee with the fear of God. May He deign to establish thy frailty, fortify thy weakness, confirm thy strength, govern thy soul, direct thy steps, inspire thy thoughts, approve thy acts, complete thy works; may He edify thee by His charity, illuminate thee by His knowledge, keep thee by His mercy, exalt thee by His holiness, strengthen thee by patience, bring thee to obedience,

prostrate thee in humility, encourage thee in continence, teach thee frugality, visit thee in infirmity, relieve thee in sadness, reanimate thee in temptation, moderate thee in prosperity, soften thee in anger, protect thy modesty, correct thy sins, pardon thy backslidings, and teach the discipline which shall lead thee, strong in all virtue and resplendent in good works, to do everything in view of the eternal reward! Mayest thou always have for thy witness Him whom thou shalt one day have for thy judge, that when thou enterest into the bridal chamber with thy lamp lighted in thy hand, thy divine Spouse may find in thee nothing impure and sordid, a soul white as snow, and a body shining with purity; so that at the terrible day of judgment the avenging flame may find nothing to consume in thee, and divine mercy find everything to crown! Mayest thou, purified in this world by monastic life, rise to the tribunal of the eternal King to dwell in His celestial presence with the hundred and forty-four thousand innocents who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, singing the new song, and receiving the reward of thy labours here below in the dwelling-place of those who live for ever.[1] Blessed be thou from

[1] "Fragilem solidet, invalidam roboret, validamque confirmet, pietate allevet, miseratione conservet, mentem regat, vias dirigat, cogitationes sanctas instituat, actus probet, opera perficiat, caritate ædificet, sapientia illuminet, castitate muniat, scientia instruat, fide confirmet, in virtute multiplicet, in sanctitate sublimet, ad patientiam præparet, ad obedientiam subdat, in humilitate prosternat, ad continentiam det fortitudinem, reddat sobriam, protegat pudicam, in infirmitate visitet, in

the highest heaven by Him who came to die upon the cross to redeem the human race, Jesus Christ our Saviour, who lives and reigns for ever with the Father and the Holy Spirit."

The bishop then placed the veil[1] on her head, saying, "Maiden, receive this veil,[2] and mayest thou bear it stainless to the tribunal of Jesus Christ,

dolore relevet, in tentatione erigat, in conversatione custodiat, in prosperitate temperet, in iracundia mitiget, iniquitatem emendet, infundat gratiam, remittat offensa, tribuat disciplinam, ut his et his similibus virtutibus fulta et sanctis operibus illustrata, illa semper studeas agere, quæ digna fiant in remuneratione. Illum habeas testem quem habitura es judicem; et aptare, ut præfulgentem gestans in manu lampadem, intratura sponsi thalamum occurras venienti cum gaudio, et nihil in te reperiat fœtidum, nihil sordidum, nihil incultum, nihil corruptum, nihil inhonestum, sed niveam et candidam animam corpusque lucidum atque splendidum; ut cum dies ille tremendus, remuneratio justorum retributioque malorum advenerit, non inveniat in te ultrix flamma quod uret sed divina pietas quod coronet, quæ jam in hoc sæculo conversatio religiosa mundavit, ut tribunal æterni regis ascensura celsa palatia cum eisdem merearis portionem qui sequuntur Agnum, et cantant canticum novum sine cessatione, illic preceptura præmium post laborem, semperque maneas in viventium regione atque ipse benedicat te de cœlis, qui per crucis passionem humanum genus est dignatus venire in terris redimere Jesus Christus, Dominus noster, qui," etc.—MARTENE, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

[1] The veil was sometimes white, as is apparent from the following service, *De Virgine Vestienda*, taken from an Irish manuscript, in the Library of Zurich, and quoted in the *Missal of Arbuthnott* of Dr Forbes, p. xiv. (Burntisland, 1864):—

"Oremus, fratres carissimi, misericordiam ut cunctum bonum tribuere dignetur huic puellæ N. quæ Deo votum candidam vestem perferre cum integritate coronæ in resurrectione vitæ æternæ quam facturus est, orantibus nobis, prestet Deus.

"Conserva, Domine, istius devotæ pudorem castitatis, dilectionem continentiæ in factis, in dictis, in cogitationibus. Per te, Christe Jesu, qui, etc.

"Accipe, puellam, pallium candidum, quod perferas ante tribunal Domini."

[2] "Accipe, puella, vel vidua, pallium."—MARTENE, *op. cit.*, p. 117. It is evident that these formulas were used at the consecration of widows as well as of virgins.

before whom bends every knee that is in heaven and earth and hell."

Then he continued: "O God, who deignest to inhabit chaste forms, and lovest the virgin soul; God who hast renewed humanity corrupted by the fraud of the devil, and re-established it by the creating Word, so as not only to restore it to primitive innocence, but to procure it everlasting possessions, and to raise it from the bosom of creatures still bound with the chains of this life, to a level with the angels:

"Look upon Thy servant here present, who, placing in Thy hand the resolution to live for ever in chastity, offers to Thee the devotion with which this vow has inspired her. Give to her, Lord, by Thy Holy Spirit, a prudent modesty, a benevolent wisdom, a sweet gravity, a chaste freedom.[1] How could a soul imprisoned in this mortal flesh have vanquished the law of nature, the liberty of licence, the strength of habit, the pricks of youth, hadst Thou not lighted in her the flame of virginity, didst Thou not Thyself nourish the flame by the courage which Thou deignest to inspire her with? Thy grace is spread throughout all nations under the sun, which are as many as the stars in number; and among all the virtues which Thou hast taught to the heirs of Thy New Testament, one gift flows from the inexhaustible fountain of Thy generosity

[1] "Sit in ea . . . prudens modestia, sapiens benignitas, gravis lenitas, casta libertas."—*Ibid.*, p. 119.

upon certain persons which, without diminishing in anything the honour of marriage, and the blessing which Thou hast promised on the conjugal tie, enables those higher souls to disdain all mortal union, to aspire to the sacrament which unites Jesus Christ to His Church, to prefer the supernatural union of which marriage is the emblem to the natural reality of marriage. This blessed virgin has known her Creator, and, emulating the purity of the angels, desires to belong only to Him who is the Spouse and the Son of perpetual virginity. Protect then, Lord, her who implores Thy help, and who comes here to be consecrated by Thy blessing. Let not the ancient enemy who is so skilful to turn aside the most excellent desires by the most insidious assaults, ever succeed in withering in her the palm of perfect maidenhood.

"Grant, Lord, by the gift of Thy Spirit, that she may keep the faith which she has sworn to Thee, that at the unknown day of Thy coming, far from being troubled, she may go forth to meet Thee in all security, and enter freely with the choir of wise virgins by the royal gates of Thy eternal dwelling-place."[1]

[1] "Deus castorum corporum benignus habitator. . . . Respice super hanc famulam tuam N. quæ in manu tua continentiæ suæ propositum collocans, tibi devotionem suam offert, a quo et ipsa idem votum assumpsit. Quando enim animus mortali carne circumdatus, legem naturæ, libertatem licentiæ, vim consuetudinis, et stimulos ætatis evinceret, nisi tu hanc flammam virginitatis, vehementer accenderes tu hanc cupiditatem in ejus corde benignus aleres, ut fortitudinem ministrares? Effusa namque in omnes gentes gratia tua, ex omni natione, quæ est sub cœlo, in stellarum innumerabilem numerum, novi Testamenti hæredibus adop-

At the conclusion of the mass, the pontiff pronounced upon the new nun a new benediction, which was turned by the acclamations of the people into a kind of dialogue.

"Send, Lord, Thy heavenly blessing upon Thy servant here present, upon our sister, who humbles herself under Thy hand, and cover her with Thy divine protection."

And all the people answered, Amen.

*The Bishop.*—May she ever flee from sin, know and desire what is good, and win the sacred treasures of heaven.

*People.*—Amen.

*Bishop.*—May she always obey the divine precepts, escape with their aid from the violent rebellions of the flesh, vanquish depraved voluptuousness by the love of chastity, keep always in her lamp the oil of holiness, and delight herself in the radiance of eternal light.

tatis, inter cæteras virtutes, quas filiis tuis non ex sanguinibus, neque ex voluntate carnis, sed de tuo spiritu genitis indidisti, etiam hoc donum in quasdam mentes de largitatis tuæ fonte defluxit, ut cum honorem nuptiarum nulla interdicta minuissent, et super conjugalem copulam tua benedictione permaneret; existerent tamen sublimiores animæ, quæ non concupiscerent quod habet mortale connubium; sed hoc eligerent quod promisit divinum Christi Ecclesiæ sacramentum: nec imitarentur quod nuptiis agitur, sed diligerent quod nuptiis prænotatur. Agnovit auctorem suum beata virginitas, et æmula integritatis angelicæ, illius thalamo illius cubiculo se devovit, qui sic perpetuæ integritatis est sponsus, quemadmodum perpetuæ virginitatis est filius. Imploranti ergo auxilium tuum, Domine, et confirmari se benedictionis tuæ consecratione cupienti, da protectionis tuæ munimen et regimen, ne hostis antiquus qui excellentiora studia, subtilioribus infestat insidiis, ad obscurandam perfectæ continentiæ palmam per aliquam mentis serpat incuriam, et rapiat de proposito virginum quod etiam moribus decet inesse nuptarum."—*Ibid.*, p. 118.

*People.*—Amen.

*Bishop.*—May she ever carry in her hand the sacred fire, and thus enter at the royal gate of heaven, in the footsteps of Christ, to live for ever with wise and spotless souls.

*People.*—Amen.

*Bishop.*—May He whose empire is without end grant our prayers.

*People.*—Amen.

*Bishop.*—The blessing of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, rest upon thee, my sister, hereafter and for ever.

*People.*—Amen.[1]

## II.

The number of bishops being so small, and the ever-increasing multitude of nuns so great, it is doubtful whether these touching and solemn services could be used in the case of all the virgins

[1] "Effunde, Domine, benedictionem cœlestem super hanc famulam, sororem nostram N. . . . quæ se humiliavit sub dextera tua.

"Protege eam protectione tua divina. Amen.

"Fugiat universa delicta, sciat sibi bona desideria præparata, ut regni cœlestis sancta conquirat lucra. Amen.

"Pareat semper divinis præceptis, ut te adjuvante vitet incendia carnis, omnemque libidinem pravæ voluptatis superet amore castitatis, habeat in se oleum sanctitatis, et lætetur cum lampadibus sempiternis. Amen.

"Gestet in manibus faces sanctas, et apud sapientes et castissimas animas, duce Christo, introire mereatur januam regni cœlestis. Amen.

"Quod ipse præstare dignetur, cujus regnum et imperium sine fine permanet in sæcula sæculorum."—MARTENE, *op. cit.*, p. 121. Cf. LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 14.

consecrated to the Lord in the Anglo-Saxon cloisters.[1] But it may be believed that they were never omitted when a maiden or widow of one of the reigning dynasties of the blood and race of Odin sought the veil of the spouses of the Lord.

Anglo-Saxon queens and princesses in the cloister.

For in England as elsewhere, and perhaps more than elsewhere, the nuns were at the same time of the highest and of the humblest classes. Some were born of those conquering and sovereign races whose exploits have been reviewed, in which the blood of the Merovingians sometimes mingled with that of the offspring of the Norse Olympus, and which, by intermarrying always among themselves, maintained in all its native purity the character of the descendants of Odin—

"Du sang de Jupiter *issues* des deux côtés,"—

they summed up in themselves all that their countrymen held in highest esteem as greatness and majesty.

But beside them, and sometimes above, when placed there by the election of communities, appears the daughter of the obscure Saxon, of the *ceorl*, perhaps even of the conquered Briton; and others from a still greater distance and lower level, redeemed from slavery and withdrawn from outrage, from the stains which were the too frequent

[1] No. 92 of the *Excerptiones* of Archbishop Egbert renews the prohibition of Pope Gelasius to give the veil to nuns at any other time than the feasts of Epiphany, Easter, or the feasts of the Apostles, unless the novice was dying.

consequence of captivity. All marched under the same banner, that of sacrifice; all bore its glorious mark. Some gave up a crown, wealth, and greatness; others their family, their love, their freedom; all had to give up themselves. The meanest in birth were certainly not those to whom the sacrifice was the most costly. It is too probable that these Anglo-Saxon princesses and great ladies were naturally haughty and insolent, hard and unkindly to the rest of mankind — in some cases bloodthirsty and pitiless, like the heroines of the Teutonic epic, Chriemhild and Brunehild; and of all the miracles wrought by Christianity in England, there is scarcely any more wonderful than the transformation of so great a number of such women, in the new communities, into docile daughters, cordial sisters, mothers truly tender and devoted to their inferiors in age and blood.

It must be acknowledged that the observation of the chroniclers of those distant centuries rarely goes beyond the queens and princesses, whose religious vocation must have specially edified and touched the souls of their contemporaries; and who, beautiful, young, and sought in marriage by princes of rank equal to their own, gave up the world to keep their love entire for God, and to consecrate so many places of refuge at once peaceful and magnificent for future generations of God's servants.

In respect to the maidens of humbler origin, but of life as pure and self-devotion as dauntless, who

surround the greater personages of our tale, we can but follow the ancient authors, taking advantage of every indication which throws light upon the life and soul of so great a multitude.

The queens and princesses range themselves into three principal classes. They were, in the first place, virgins devoted to God, sometimes from the cradle, like the abbesses Ebba of Coldingham and Elfleda of Whitby, who were the devoted friends and protectresses of Wilfrid. Then followed wives who separated themselves from their husbands, during their lifetime, and often much against their will, to embrace a religious life: of this class St Etheldreda is the most celebrated example. And, finally, widows who ended in the cloister a life mostly devoted on the throne to the active extension as well as the self-sacrificing practice of the new religion. We have seen more than one touching example of the last-named class—such as that of Queen Eanfleda, the first benefactress of Wilfrid, who, after the death of her husband King Oswy, found shelter for her widowhood at Whitby, and there ended her days under the crosier of her daughter.

The first nuns trained in France.

By a privilege which does honour to France, it was among us, in the country of Queen Bertha, the first Christian queen of the Anglo-Saxons, that the first English nuns were trained. France was thus the cradle of the Anglo-Saxon communities. In the time of the first missionaries, when monasteries were

few, many of the new Christians of England learned the rules of monastic life among the Gallo-Franks, to whom they had been taught, more than a century before, by the glorious St Martin, and after him by St Maur, the cherished disciple of St Benedict, and by St Columbanus, the illustrious propagator of Celtic monachism. The Anglo-Saxons sent or took their daughters into Gaul, and the first beginning, in particular, of the great Christianity which was about to burst the bud in Great Britain, seem to have been specially prepared and formed in the communities on the banks of the Marne and the Seine, at Jouarre, Faremoutier, les Andelys, and later at Chelles.[1]

Especially at Faremoutier.

Jouarre, Faremoutier, and the neighbouring monasteries formed a sort of monastic province, dependent on Luxeuil, and occupied by the disciples of St Columbanus.[2] The pious and courageous Burgundofara, *la noble baronne de Bourgogne*, blessed from her infancy by the holy patriarch of Luxeuil, ruled at Faremoutier the great foundation which has made her name illustrious for twelve centuries. She had with her an entire colony of young Anglo-Saxons. It had been the intention of Hilda, the great Abbess of Whitby, from the time when she made up her mind to leave the world,[3]

[1] "Multi de Britannia monachicæ conversationis gratia, Francorum vel Gallicorum monasteria adire solebant; sed et filias suas eisdem erudiendas ac sponso cœlesti copulandas mittebant."—BEDE, l. iii. c. 8.

[2] See vol. ii. p. 494, 501.

[3] See vol. iv. p. 59. Bede says that it was at Chelles that Hereswida

to lead a conventual life in one of the cloisters on the banks of the Marne, where her sister, Hereswida, the Queen of East Anglia, even before she became a widow, had sought an asylum, and where she ended her life in the practice of the monastic rule.[1]

However, it was not the Northumbrians alone—as might have been expected from the connection which linked to the great Catholic apostles of converted France a country itself converted to Christianity by Celtic missionaries—who thus sought the spiritual daughters of St Columbanus. The young princesses and daughters of the great lords belonging to the kingdom of Kent, which was exclusively converted by Roman missionaries, showed as much, or even greater eagerness. The great-granddaughter of the first Christian king of the Anglo-Saxons, Earcongotha, added a new lustre to the community of Faremoutier by the holiness of her life and death. She was, says Bede, a virgin of great virtue, worthy in everything of her illustrious

became a nun. Pagi, in his criticism on Baronius (ad ann. 680, c. 14 to 20), maintains by arguments too long to be quoted that Bede and Mabillon were both mistaken, one in supposing Hereswida to have been a nun at Chelles, and the other in thinking that Hilda joined her there. He proves that there was no trace of the two sisters either in the archives or calendars of Chelles before 1672, the epoch when the community obtained from Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, by means of the famous casuist St Beuve, authority to celebrate the feast of St Hilda on the 27th of November, and to inscribe the name of St Hereswida on the calendar of the sacristy at the date of December 9.

[1] "In eodem monasterio soror ipsius Hereswid, mater Aldulfii regis orientalium Anglorum, regularibus subdita disciplinis, ipso tempore coronam expectabat æternam."—BEDE, iv. 23. Pagi thinks she became a nun seven years before the death of her husband, but with his consent.

origin.[1] East Anglia paid also its contribution to the powerful foundation of the noble Burgundofara. Two sisters of Etheldreda, whose strange story has been already recorded, governed in succession, notwithstanding their character of foreigners, the Gallo-Frankish Abbey of Faremoutier, while their sister founded the greatest convent of nuns which had yet been seen in England.[2] Ten centuries later another foreign princess, who had been received at Faremoutier, and whose memory has been made immortal by the genius of Bossuet, gave him an occasion to sound the praises of this famous house in a language which was perhaps more applicable to the community of the seventh century than to that of the seventeenth. "In the solitude of Sainte-Fare—as much separated from all worldly ways as its blessed position now separates it from all traffic with the world; in that holy mountain where the spouses of Jesus Christ revive the beauty of ancient days, where the joys of earth are unknown, where the traces of worldly men, of the curious and wandering, appear not—under the guidance of the holy abbess, who gave milk to babes as well as bread to the strong, the beginning of the Princess Anne was very happy."[3]

[1] "Ut condigna parenti soboles, magnarum fuit virgo virtutum, serviens Domino in monasterio quod . . . constructum est ab abbatissa nobilissima, vocabulo Fara."—BEDE, iii. 8.

[2] "Sæthryd, filia uxoris Annæ regis . . . et filia naturalis ejusdem regis Ædilberg, quæ utraque, cum esset peregrina, præ merito virtutum . . . est abbatissa constituta."—*Ibid.* Cf. BOLLAND, vol. ii. July, p. 481.

[3] *Oraison Funèbre de la Princesse Palatine, Anne de Gonzague.*

The illustrious abbess whom Queen Bathilde, herself an Anglo-Saxon by birth, placed in the celebrated Monastery of Chelles when she re-established it, saw her community increased by a crowd of nuns whom the fame of her great qualities and tender kindness attracted from the other side of the Channel. Christians of both sexes felt the power of this attraction, for there were at Chelles as many Anglo-Saxon monks as nuns. Everything prospered so well, everything breathed a piety so active, fervent, and charitable, that the kings of the Heptarchy, moved by the perfume of virtue and good fame that rose from the double monastery peopled by their country-folks, emulated each other in praying the Abbess Bertile to send them colonies from her great bee-hive to occupy new foundations in England.[1]

Botulph and the two East Anglian princesses.

In this way probably came Botulph, whom we have already mentioned, and who was the one of Wilfrid's contemporaries most actively engaged in the extension of monastic institutions.[2] Before he was restored to his native soil, he had inspired with a lively and deep affection for himself two young

[1] "Cujus conversatio sobria et benignissima advocavit plurimas fidelium animas feminarum immoque et virorum. Nec solummodo ex vicina provincia, sed etiam ex transmarinis partibus, sanctæ hujus feminæ felici fama percurrente, ad eam relictis parentibus et patria cum summo amoris desiderio . . . festinabant. . . . Etiam a transmarinis partibus Saxoniæ reges illi fideles ab ea permissos postulabant . . . qui virorum et sanctimonialum cœnobia in illa regione construerent."—*Vita S. Bertilæ*, c. 5, 6, ap. MABILLON, *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, see vol. iii. p. 20.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 459.

Anglo-Saxon princesses who had been sent to France, when scarcely more than infants, to learn monastic life. They loved in him, we are told, not only a great master in holy and chaste living, but still more their countryman, a teacher of their own country and race. When they knew that he was about to return to England, they were overwhelmed with sadness, their only consolation in which was to recommend him with all their might to their young brother, who was king, it is not known where, under the regency of his mother; after which there is no mention of them in history.[1] The touching image of these two young creatures appears in history only to bear witness to the faithfulness of their patriotism in the pious exile which was imposed upon them. It is a sentiment of which we shall find many traces among the Anglo-Saxon nuns.

Were there Celtic nuns among the Anglo-Saxons?

But among the first nuns of the Heptarchy were there not, in the first place, virgins of Celtic origin, from Scotland or Ireland, like the monk-missionaries whose labours have been set forth? Nothing is more probable, though there is no positive proof of their existence. It would be impossible from this point of view to pass in silence a

[1] "Erant in eodem monasterio . . . sorores duæ Edelmundi regis . . . diligebantque præcipuum patrem Botulfum sicut doctorem sanctitatis et castimoniæ, et plurimum ob studium gentis suæ. Adhuc siquidem tenellulæ missæ fuerant ultra mare ad discendam in monasteriali gymnasio disciplinam cœlestis sophiæ. Videntes beatum ad dilectum Doctorem velle repatriare, mœrentes mandata imponunt præferenda regi et fratri."—*Vita S. Botulfi*, ap. *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, sæc. iii. vol. iii. p. 3.

holy princess whose name is still popular in the north of England, and who has been long concluded by the annalists to be of Irish origin, while, at the same time, they recognise in her the instructress of the women and maidens of Northumbria in monastic life. To the west of this district, in the county which we now call Cumberland, upon a promontory bathed by the waves of the Irish Sea, and from which in clear weather the southern shore of Scotland and the distant peaks of the Isle of Man may be seen, a religious edifice still bears the name and preserves the recollection of St Bega.[1] She was, according to the legend, the daughter of an Irish king, the most beautiful woman in the country, and already asked in marriage by the son of the King of Norway. But she had vowed herself, from her tenderest infancy, to the Spouse of virgins, and had received from an angel, as a seal of her celestial betrothal, a bracelet marked with the sign of the cross.[2] On the night before her wedding day, while the guards of the king her father, instead of keep-

Legend of St Bega.

[1] In English, St Bees. This is the name still borne by the promontory surmounted by a lighthouse, and situated a little south of Whitehaven. Below the southern slope of the promontory, and sheltered by its height from the sea-breezes, in the midst of a group of fine trees, stands the Priory, built by Raoul de Meschines in 1120, and restored in 1817, to be used as an English Church college. There remain still some precious relics of the buildings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and even, according to some antiquaries, of the Saxon edifice destroyed by the Danes, which preceded the Norman foundation.

[2] "Accipe, inquit, eulogium istud a Domino tibi missum, quo te illi subaratam (*sic*) agnoscas. Pone ergo illud sicut signum super cor tuum et super brachium tuum, ut nullum admittas præter ipsum." Cf. Cantic. viii. 6.

ing watch, as usual, with sabres at their side and axes on their shoulders, were, like their guests, deep in the revel, she escaped alone, with nothing but the bracelet which the angel had given her, threw herself into a skiff, and landed on the opposite shore, in Northumbria, where she lived long in a cell in the midst of the wood, uniting the care of the sick poor around with her prayers.[1] Fear of the pirates who infested these coasts led her, after a while, farther inland. What then became of her? Here the confusion, which is so general in the debatable ground between legend and history, becomes nearly inextricable. Was it she who, under the name of Heïu, is pointed out to us by Bede as the woman to whom Bishop Aïdan, the apostle of Northumbria, gave the veil, and whom he placed at the head of the first nunnery which had been seen in the north of England?[2] Or was it she who, under the name of Begu, after having abdicated the dignity of abbess, lived for thirty years a humble and simple nun in one of the monasteries under the rule of the great Abbess of Whitby, Hilda, whose intimate

[1] "Erat speciosa forma præ cunctis filiabus regionis illius. . . . Virgo armillam super se fere indesinenter portavit. . . . Indulgebant calicibus epotandis potentes ad potandum et viri fortes ad miscendam ebrietatem. . . . Plures ex fortissimis Hyberniæ ambiebant totum palatium et uniuscujusque sica super femur suum et bipennis super humerum et lancea in manu ejus. . . . Pater ejus . . . inventam reduceret, et reductam plagis vapularet multis. . . . Omnia claustra ad tactum armillæ clavis David virgini egregiæ egredienti aperuit. . . . In loco tunc temporis satis nemoroso secus litus maris posito cellam virgineam sibi construxit."—*Vitæ S. Begæ et de Miraculis ejusdem*, ed. Tomlinson (Carlisle, 1842), p. 46-53.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 58.

friend she became, as well as her daughter in religion?[1] These are questions which have been long disputed by the learned, and which it seems impossible to bring to any satisfactory conclusion.[2] What is certain, however, is, that a virgin of the name of Bega figures among the most well-known and long venerated saints of the north-west of England. She was celebrated during her life-time for her austerity, her fervour, and an anxiety for the poor which led her, during the building of her monastery, to prepare with her own hands the food of the masons, and to wait upon them in their workshops, hastening from place to place like a bee laden with honey.[3] She remained down to the middle ages, the patroness of the laborious and

[1] BEDE, *Hist. Eccles.*, iv. 23.

[2] Most ancient authors believed this. The Bollandists themselves (vol. ii. Sept., p. 694) seem to admit it, though they seem to have had no knowledge of the *Life* of the saint, written by the monks of St Bees, and which is founded entirely on this belief. The *Vita S. Begæ et de Miraculis ejusdem*, which was published for the first time in 1842, from a MS. in the British Museum, by Mr Tomlinson, in the collection called *Carlisle Historical Tracts*, should not, however, in our opinion, counterbalance the contemporary testimony of Bede. The latter, always so careful to notice the Scottish origin of the personages of his narrative whenever there is occasion, remains silent as to that of the first Northumbrian nun; and the two passages of the same chapter (iv. 23), where he speaks of Heïu, foundress of Hartlepool, and of Begu, contemporary with the death of Hilda, seem in no way to point to the same person. The Rev. Father Faber, in his *Life of St Bega*, published while he was still an Anglican, in 1844, seems to hold that there were at least two saints whose acts are confounded together, and takes care to declare that his narrative does not pretend to historical accuracy. Wordsworth dedicated, in 1833, some of his finest verses to the still popular memory of the Irish saint, and of the places which bear her name.

[3] "In officinis monasterii construendis . . . manu sua cibos coquens parabat, artificibus apparebat, velut apis mellificans, currens et discurrens ministrabat."—*Vita S. Begh.*, p. 55.

often oppressed population of the district, in which tradition presents her to us as arriving alone and fearless on a foreign shore, flying from her royal bridegroom. In the twelfth century the famous bracelet which the angel had given her was regarded with tender veneration: the pious confidence of the faithful turned it into a relic upon which usurpers, prevaricators, and oppressors against whom there existed no other defence, were made to swear, with the certainty that a perjury committed on so dear and sacred a pledge would not pass unpunished. It was also to Bega and her bracelet that the cultivators of the soil had recourse against the new and unjust taxes with which their lords burdened them. In vain the Scottish rievers, or the *prepotents* of the country, treading down under their horses' feet the harvests of the Cumbrians, made light of the complaints and threats of the votaries of St Bega. "What is the good old woman to me, and what harm can she do me?" said one. "Let your Bega come!" said another—"let her come and do whatever she likes! She cannot make one of our horses cast their shoes."[1] Sooner or later divine vengeance

[1] "Protulerunt in medium S. Begæ virginis armillam, quia confidebant inultum non præterire perjurium super illam perpetratum. . . . Versabatur illo tempore controversia inter eos qui dominabantur terræ de Coupelandia, et homines subditos sibi, super quadam consuetudine qua boves solebant dominis pensari. . . . Impetebantur homines et cogebantur plus reddere quam arbitrabantur se solvere debere. . . .

"'Quid mihi facere poterit vetula illa?' et manum ad secretiores partes natium admovens: 'Hic, hic, inquit, sagittabit me.' . . . Quidam autem adolescentulus sagittam . . . jaciens . . . percussit illum in fonticulo fondamenti, quem ipse manu sua designaverat. . . . 'Veniat Bega, ven-

struck these culprits; and the fame of the chastisements sent upon them confirmed the faith of the people in the powerful intercession of her who, six hundred years after her death, still gave a protection so effectual and energetic against feudal rudeness, to the captive and to the oppressed, to the chastity of women, and the rights of the lowly, upon the western shore of Northumbria, as did St Cuthbert throughout the rest of that privileged district.[1]

Confusion between legend and history.

In proportion, however, as the details of the lives of holy nuns in England are investigated, the difficulty of tracing the line of demarcation between history and legend becomes more and more evident. But after all let us not lament too much over this confusion. True history—"that which modifies souls, and forms opinions and manners"[2]—is not produced solely from dates and facts, but from the ideas and impressions which fill and sway the souls of contemporaries; translating into facts, anec-

iat, et quod potest faciat.'"—*De Miraculis*, p. 68, 69, 62, 66. There is a curious passage in this work, p. 63, as to the terror with which, in the twelfth century, the Scottish marauders were inspired by those English arrows which were afterwards so fatal to the French nobles in the great battles of the fourteenth century.

[1] See above, vol. iv. p. 424. The narrative of St Bega's miracles is clearly of the same period and conceived in the same spirit as the *Libellus de Admirandis Beati Cuthberti Virtutibus*. The most popular of these miracles and that best remembered in the country, reminds us of the one commemorated at Rome on the festival of St Mary of the Snow, the 15th of August. A fall of snow, in the midst of summer, marked exactly the disputed possessions of the monastery, the same which had been the original domain of the saint. Compare the text published by Tomlinson, p. 64, and the tradition preserved in the MSS. of the Chapter of Carlisle, ap. *Notes on St Bega*, p. 15.

[2] LITTRE, *Journal des Savants*, November 1862.

dotes and scenes, the sentiments of admiration, gratitude, and love which inspire them for beings whom they believe to be of a superior nature to themselves, and whose benefits and example survive the ravages of time and human inconstancy.

We must then make up our minds to meet with this confusion through the entire series of our narratives, which are intended to give a picture of the faith and passions, the virtues and vices, of the new Christians of England, rather than to trace in methodical and chronological succession the course of uncertain or insignificant events. Let our readers be contented with our assurance that we will never permit ourselves to present to them, under the guise of truth, acts or words which are not of undisputed certainty.

Division of the nuns, whose biographies have been preserved, according to the dynasties from which they sprang.

To put some sort of order into the notes which we have gleaned on the subject of the Anglo-Saxon nuns, it will be well to arrange them according to the principal dynasties, or families and countries from which had issued all those noble women so devoted to God, St Peter, and St Benedict, who have gained a place on the altars of Catholic England.

The Northumbrians.

I do not think I have anything to add to what has already been said in respect to the Northumbrian princesses, descendants of Ella and Ida, the *Man of Fire* and the *Ravager*. The holy and powerful abbesses, Hilda of Whitby, Ebba of Coldingham, Elfleda, the daughter of Oswy, who was dedicated to God from her birth as a ransom for

the liberation of her country, her mother Eanfleda, who on becoming a widow entered the abbey of her daughter—these often-repeated names cannot have escaped the memory of our readers. Let us add only, according to a tradition, ancient and widely spread,[1] though disputed by modern learning, that the three sons of Oswy who reigned over Northumberland in succession, and who have been so often mentioned in the life of Wilfrid, were all three forsaken by their wives, who determined to consecrate themselves to God; though doubtless the two princesses married to the elder and younger of these princes neither occasioned the same struggle nor won the same fame as their sister-in-law St Etheldreda, the wife of King Egfrid.

Let us then pass to the princesses of the most ancient Anglo-Saxon dynasty, the first converted to Christianity, that of the Ascings who reigned over the Jutes in the kingdom of Kent.

The Ascings, or dynasty of Kent.

The first and most historical figure which we meet in the cloister among the descendants of Hengist is that of the gentle and devoted Ethelburga, whose life is linked so closely with the history of the beginning of Northumbrian Christianity.[2] She was the daughter of the first Christian king of South Anglia, and married the first Christian king

[1] This tradition, accepted by Pagi (*ubi supra*) from William of Malmesbury, Alford, and many others, is disputed by the Bollandists as regards the two princesses married to the two brothers, Alchfrid the friend, and Aldfrid the enemy, of Wilfrid.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 434, 454.

of the North, Edwin, whose conversion was so difficult, whose reign was so prosperous, and his end so glorious. After the rapid ruin of that first Northumbrian Christianity which she, along with Bishop Paulinus, had begun, Queen Ethelburga, received with tender sympathy by her brother, the King of Kent, cared for no other crown but that of holy poverty. She obtained from her brother the gift of an ancient Roman villa, situated between Canterbury and the sea, on the coast opposite France, and there founded a monastery, where she herself took the veil. She was thus the first widow of Saxon race who consecrated herself to monastic life. The old church of her monastery, called Lyminge, still exists. The burying-place of the foundress, who passed there the fourteen last years of her life, and who, daughter of the founder of Canterbury and widow of the founder of York, was thus the first link between the two great centres of Catholic life among the Anglo-Saxons, is still shown.[1]

Ethelburga, founder of Lyminge.

We shall add nothing to what has been already said in respect to the daughter of Ethelburga, first Queen of Northumberland, and then a nun like her mother,[2] nor of her granddaughter, the Abbess El-

[1] It is believed that remains of the Roman buildings have been discovered in certain portions of the present church of Lyminge. The tomb of St Ethelburga was situated under a buttress at the south-east of the choir.—Rev. R. C. JENKINS, *Account of the Church of St Mary and St Eadburgh in Lyminge;* London and Folkestone, 1859. Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1862.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 48, 134, and genealogical tables A and B.

fleda, the amiable friend of St Cuthbert, and generous protectress of St Wilfrid.[1] But she had a sister, named Eadburga, who was a nun with her at Lyminge, and who, buried by her side in the monastery, was venerated along with her among the saints of England.[2] Her brother, who, like his father, married a Frankish princess,[3] the great-granddaughter of Clovis and St Clothilde, peopled with his descendants the Anglo-Saxon, and even foreign monasteries. Without speaking of his granddaughters, Earcongotha, who became, as has been formerly said, Abbess of Faremoutier in France, and Ermenilda, Queen of Mercia, whom we have already seen, and shall meet again further on among the abbesses of Ely,[4] this second Christian king of the most ancient kingdom of the Heptarchy had a daughter called Eanswida, who, educated by the Roman missionaries at Canterbury, received from them the veil of the brides of God. She distinguished herself by the foundation of a monastery, which, with true Roman spirit, she dedicated to St Peter, and of which she was the superior, at Folkestone, on the heights of those white cliffs crowned by green pasturage, which attract the first glance of the numberless travellers whom the

Eanswida, founder of Folkestone.

[1] See vol. iv. p. 298, 410.

[2] BOLLAND, *Act. SS.*, Feb., vol. ii. p. 383, and vol. iii. p. 690.

[3] Emma, daughter of Clotaire II.—BOLL., vol. viii. Oct., p. 90.

[4] They were both daughters of King Ercombert and St Sexburga, she who was Abbess of Ely after her sister Etheldreda. See genealogical table D.

rapid prows of our day deposit at that spot upon the English shore.

Legends of all kinds have accumulated round the name of this young and holy descendant of Hengist and Clovis ; the gaps in her authentic history are filled by incidents which show the idea formed by the Anglo-Saxons of the supernatural power with which a monastic vocation invested a daughter of the sovereign race. Her father, it was told, proposed to marry her, like her aunt, to a Northumbrian prince, who was still a heathen. She obstinately refused. King Eadbald did not attempt to force her ; but her suitor came with his train to urge his suit in person at a time when she was herself superintending the building of her future cloister. She sent him away without pity, defying him to lengthen, by the aid of his false gods, a rafter which was too short, which she herself succeeded in doing by praying with all her might to the true Saviour of the world. As soon as she was installed in her monastery she made it, after the fashion of all the religious foundations of the time, a great agricultural establishment as well as an ascetic sanctuary and a literary school. There, according to the popular tale, she tamed flocks of wild geese which spoiled her harvests, and which her servants stole from her poultry-yard and ate to her great displeasure ; with the tip of her crosier she dug a canal to bring to the monastery a stream of fresh water which was wanting. She died young in 640 : her

abbey, which was built too near the sea on an overhanging rock, was swallowed up by the waves;[1] but the memory of this daughter of the conquering race, herself conquered by the love of God and her neighbour, long survived in the prayers of the faithful.[2] More than six hundred years after her death, a powerful Anglo-Norman baron renewed the Benedictine foundation of the Anglo-Saxon princess, dedicating the church to St Peter and St Eanswida.[3]

Legend of Domneva and her brothers.

Another branch of the posterity of Hengist, issued from a young brother of Eanswida, who died before his father,[4] has also been taken possession of by legendary lore. This prince left two sons and four daughters; the latter were all nuns, and reckoned among the saints.[5] His two sons[6] were venerated as martyrs, according to the general idea of the time, which regarded as martyrdom every kind of violent death endured by the innocent. They were assassinated by a thane named Thunnor, who thus attempted to do a pleasure to King Egbert, the fourth successor of St Ethelbert,

[1] "A Romanis monachis velatam esse, nullum dubium est, et monasticum institutum ab eisdem edoctam. . . . Oratorium suum rupibus suspensum, mari supereminens."—BOLL., vol. iv. August, p. 685, 686.

[2] The Bollandists have published a fragment of her office.

[3] This baron's name was John de Segrave, and his wife's Juliana de Sandwich.—STEVENS, i. 399, ex. WEEVER, p. 270.

[4] He was called Ermenifred, and his death left the throne of Kent to his brother Ercombert, the third Christian king, father of King Egfrid, and of the saints Ermenilda and Earcongotha. See genealogical table B.

[5] Ermenberga or Domneva, Ermenburga, Etheldreda, and Ermengytha.

[6] Ethelbert and Ethelred.

by freeing him of young cousins who might become dangerous competitors.[1] The legend here rises to the rank of true poetry, and at the same time embodies true morality, as is almost always the case. In a vain attempt to hide, it says, the bones of his victims, the assassin buried them in the palace of the king, and even under the throne on which he sat on festive occasions ;[2] but a supernatural light came to denounce the crime, shining upon the unknown tomb, and revealing it to the devotion of the faithful. The king, amazed and abashed, had to expiate the crime which was committed, if not by his orders at least to his advantage. Supported by the popular clamour, the two illustrious foreign monks, who were then the chief-justices and peacemakers of the country, Theodore, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the African Adrian, abbot of St Augustin,[3] intimated to him that he must pay the *price of blood*—that is to say, the compensation ordained by all Teutonic laws—to a sister of the victims, and that all the more that this sister, called Domneva, was married to a Mercian prince, son of the savage and unconquerable Penda.[4] This ransom of blood was to take the form of a terri-

[1] Bede says nothing of all this ; but it has been related with more or less of detail by all the more recent authorities, William of Malmesbury, Simeon of Durham, Matthew of Westminster, and above all Thorne, in his Chronicle of the Abbey of St Augustin at Canterbury. Cf. LAPPENBERG, i. 239, and THOMAS OF ELMHAM, who gives a very detailed version, p. 209 to 239 of the new edition issued by Hardwicke.

[2] "In aula regia, sub regia cathedra."—MATTH. WESTMONAST., p. 14.

[3] See their part in the history of Wilfrid, vol. iv. p. 197.

[4] See genealogical tables B and C.

torial gift for the foundation of a monastery in which virgins consecrated to God should for ever supplicate divine pardon. Domneva asked for as much land as a tame doe which belonged to her, could run round in one course. The spot was the island of Thanet, at the mouth of the Thames, where their ancestor Hengist and, two centuries later, St Augustin, had landed; and which was doubly dear to the nation as the place at which the Saxon occupation began and Christianity first appeared among them. It was, besides, a very fertile spot, the flower and jewel of the country, a sort of terrestrial paradise.[1] King Egbert consented to this arrangement, and the parties met on the ground. The doe was let loose, and the king and his court followed it with their eyes, when the villain Thunnor arrived, crying out that Domneva was a witch, who had bewitched the king to make him give up his fair lands to the instinct of a brute. Then, being on horseback, he pursued the doe to stop her; but in his wild career he came to a well, in which he was drowned, and which has ever since been called *Thunnor's leap*.[2] The doe's course

The course of the doe in the island of Thanet.

[1] "Post sororem eorum Dompnenam misit, ut ipsa interfectionis pretium reciperet. . . . Venit rex tristis, veniam petiit. . . . Respondit Dompnena: Quantum cerva mea domestica uno impetu percurrere poterit. . . . Emissa cerva currit velociter, aspiciente rege cum suis hilari vultu cursum cervæ. . . . Insula arridens bona rerum copia, regni flos et thalamus . . . in qua tanquam quodam Elysio. . . . Clamavit Dompnenam incantatricem, et insipientem regem qui terram fertilem et nobilem bruti animalis indicio tradidit."

[2] The situation of the well and the whole direction of the doe's course may be found in the old and curious map of the Isle of Thanet, which has

included forty-two plough-lands: she crossed the island in two different directions before returning to her mistress. The land thus marked out was given over to Domneva and her spiritual posterity. Archbishop Theodore immediately consecrated the new foundation, which took the name of *Minster*, as who should say *The* Monastery.[1]

Domneva became a widow, and taking then the name of Ermenberga,[2] was the first abbess of the new community, which was soon occupied by seventy nuns. But she soon gave up the government to her daughter Mildred, whom she had sent into France, to Chelles, to receive a literary and religious education. The Abbess of Chelles, far from encouraging the young princess to embrace monastic life, employed every kind of threat and ill-usage to compel her to marry one of her relatives: thus at least says the legend, which is too singular, and too different in this point from all similar narratives, not to have a certain authenticity. But Mildred resisted the temptation victoriously. She returned to England to govern the abbey

been republished in miniature in Dugdale's *Monasticon* (i. 84), and by the Bollandists (vol. iv. of July, p. 513), but the exact facsimile of which is found in the new edition of Elmham.

[1] This monastery, like all the English ones, was destroyed by the Danes and rebuilt under the Normans. There still remains a large and beautiful church, newly restored. It is supposed that some remains of Domneva's original building can be traced in a portion of the tower of this church, built of large stones and Roman tiles.—*Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1862.

[2] According to another version she was called Ermenberga before she became abbess, and only then assumed the name of *Domna Ebba*, or Domneva.—BOLLAND., vol. viii. Oct. p. 91.

founded by her mother, and to give an example of all the monastic virtues to her seventy companions. Very few details of her life have been preserved: which makes the extraordinary and prolonged popularity which has attached to her name, her relics, and everything belonging to her, all the more wonderful. Her popularity eclipsed that of St Augustin even in the district which he first won to the faith, and to such a point that the rock which had received the mark of his first footstep,[1] and which lies a little to the east of Minster, took and retained up to the eighteenth century the name of St Mildred's Rock.

Great popularity of Mildred.

An entire chapter would be necessary to narrate the violent struggles, the visions, and other incidents which are connected with the history of her relics, and what hagiographers call her posthumous fame. Her name, like that of many other Anglo-Saxon nuns, has once more become fashionable in our days, but it recalls to our ungrateful contemporaries nothing but the vague poetry of the past. It was mixed up with the real history of the Danes and Normans, of Canute the Great, of Edward the Confessor, of Lanfranc, of Edward I., the terrible victor of the Scots and Welsh.[2] The worship of Mildred appears interspersed in the midst of all these personages with every kind of edifying and amusing anec-

[1] See above, vol. iii. p. 341. Cf. STANLEY, *Historical Memorials of Canterbury*.

[2] BOLLAND., *loc. cit.* Cf. OAKLEY, *Life of St Augustin*, p. 134.

dote, such as touch the most delicate and the most diverse chords of the human heart. By the side of the touching scene in which the persecuted wife of Edward the Confessor, forsaken by all, is consoled by the apparition of Mildred—and the story of the solemn translation of her relics by Archbishop Lanfranc—are found grotesque incidents, such as that of the bell-ringer who, while asleep before her shrine, was woke by a box on the ear administered by the holy princess, who said to him, "This is the oratory and not the dormitory."[1] In that wonderful efflorescence of imagination quickened by faith which for several centuries was interwoven with all Christian society, the legend had something for all—for crowned heads and common people, and could at the same time move its audience to laugh or to weep. Let us return to history by adding that William the Conqueror, when he became master of England, formally respected the right of asylum claimed by criminals at the place where the relics of Mildred lay; for, while destroying the Anglo-Saxon crown, he took great care to aim no blow at the persevering devotion shown by his new subjects for the saints of both sexes who had proceeded from their national dynasties.

The sisters of Mildred.

Mildred had two sisters, whose names are connected with hers by that eccentric taste for alliteration which characterises the Anglo-Saxons.

[1] "Inæstimabili decore fulgida . . . elata palma, alapam ei dedit, docens oratorium, non dormitorium, ibi esse."—BOLLAND., vol. iv. July, p. 518.

Their names were Milburga and Milgytha; they were both nuns like their sister, their mother, their three aunts, their grandaunt Eanswida, and their great-grandaunts Ethelburga and Eadburga.[1] We are now at the fourth generation of the descendants of the first Christian king, and we may well say with Mabillon: *Puellarum regiarum, quibus idem animus fuit, numerus iniri vix potest.*[2] The three daughters of the foundress of Minster were compared to Faith, Hope, and Charity.[3] Nothing is known of Milgytha except that she was a nun at Canterbury.[4] As for Milburga, she was consecrated by the Archbishop Theodore abbess of a monastery founded beyond the Severn, upon the borders of Anglo-Saxon territory and the land still held by the Celts of Cambria. Like Mildred, she has furnished more than one expressive incident to monastic legends. The young abbess was exposed, like so many of her fellows, to the pursuit of a neighbouring prince, who, being determined to marry her, attempted to seize her person by force. As she fled before the sacrilegious band, a river which she had just crossed rose all at once into flood, so as to place an insurmountable barrier in the way of the too eager suitor, who thereupon

Milburga

[1] See genealogical table B.

[2] *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, sæc. iii. 1, p. 40.

[3] "Nomina simillima, par formarum gloria . . . mens et amor et sanctitas trium erat unica. Hinc Milburga, ut fides, inde Milgytha, ut spes, media coruscat Mildretha, ut caritas."—BOLLAND., *loc. cit.*, p. 516.

[4] BOLLAND., vol. ii. January, p. 176.

gave up the pursuit. Another miracle, attributed to her, recalls the most touching of those which are mentioned in the life of Wilfrid. A poor widow came to her one day when she was alone in her oratory, and, throwing herself on her knees, besought her with tears to raise up her dead child, whose poor little body she had brought with her. Milburga asked if she were mad. "Go," she said, "bury your son, and prepare to die, in your turn, like him; for we are all born but to die." "No, no," said the widow, "I will not leave you till you have restored to me my son alive." The abbess then prayed by the little corpse, and all at once she appeared to the poor mother surrounded by a flame which descended from heaven, the living emblem of the fervour of her prayer. An instant after, life came back to the child. When Milburga had reached the end of her own days, which were fragrant with charity and purity, she gathered all her community around her deathbed. "Beloved sisters," she said, "I have always loved you as my own soul, and I have watched over you like a mother. I have now come to the end of my pilgrimage; I leave you to God and to the blessed Virgin Mary." With which words she died. Four hundred years after her death her monastery, which had been destroyed by the Danes, was re-established by a colony of monks from Cluny. While they were building the church, a heavenly fragrance betrayed the place of Milburga's burial. Her relics

And the dead child.

23d Feb. 722.

were exposed to public veneration, and an innumerable crowd hastened to visit them—old and young, rich and poor, rivalling each other in the pilgrimage. All the surrounding country was covered by a tide of pilgrims: so great, nowithstanding the double invasion of Danes and Normans and the passage of centuries, was the fidelity of the English people to the memory of the first saints of their race.[1]

These three sisters were grandchildren of the savage Penda.

In order not to separate the three sisters from their mother, we have introduced them after the holy nuns of the dynasty of Hengist and Ethelbert, from whom they were descended by the mother's side. But by their father, who belonged to the reigning family of Mercia, they were the granddaughters of Penda, the most terrible enemy of the Christian name.[2]

The Mercian dynasty, descended from Penda, furnishes most of the saints.

In fact, a transformation far more sudden and not less complete than that which turned the granddaughters of the *Ravager* and *Man of Fire* into abbesses and saints, was wrought upon the posterity of the ferocious Penda of Mercia, the warlike octogenarian, who had been the last and most formidable hero of Anglo-Saxon paganism.[3] Of all the races descended from Odin who shared among them

[1] "Non a te recedam, nisi prolem meam restituas vivam. . . . Vos hactenus, dilectissimæ sorores, sicut animæ meæ viscera dilexi."—CAPGRAVE, ap. BOLLAND., vol. iii. February, p. 390. "Vix patuli campi capiebant agmina viatorum . . . cunctos in commune præcipitante fide."—GUILL. MALMESB., *De Gest. Reg.*, lib. ii. c. 13.

[2] See genealogical table C.

[3] See vol. iv.

the sway of England, no one has furnished a larger list of nuns and saints to be inscribed in the national calendar than the descendants of Penda, as if they thus meant to pay a generous ransom for the calamities inflicted upon the new Christians of England by their most cruel enemy.[1] We will not return again to speak of his firstborn son, whose love for the daughter of Oswy made him the firstborn son of the Church in Mercia, the first Christian baptised in that country;[2] nor of his first successor Wulphere, the generous founder of Peterborough; nor of his other successor Ethelred, the devoted friend of Wilfrid, who ended his thirty years' reign by ten years of life in a monastery. We treat only at this moment of the daughters and granddaughters of the sanguinary victor who had cut off so many Christian kings among the neighbouring nations.

An obstinate tradition found in the ancient English chronicles asserts that two of his daughters, Kyneburga and Kyneswitha, both gave up the thought of marriage to consecrate themselves to God. The eldest, who was married to the intimate friend of her brother Peada, the eldest son of King Oswy of Northumbria, the friend and first protector of Wilfrid,[3] is said to have left him with his consent to end her life in the cloister. The youngest, sought in marriage by Offa, King of the East Saxons,

[1] "Ita parens perpetuo in Deum rebellis sanctissimos cœlo fructus effudit."—THOMAS DE ELMHAM, p. 189.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 114.

[3] See vol. iv. p. 113.

used her connection with him only to persuade the young prince to embrace monastic life as she herself wished to do.[1] A more profound study, however, of the period has made the authenticity of this legend doubtful.[2] But it has proved that the two daughters of the bloody Penda contributed, with their brothers, to the establishment of the great Abbey of Medehampstede or Peterborough; that their names appear in the lists of the national assembly which sanctioned this foundation, and that they spent their retired and virginal lives in some retreat near the new sanctuary. After their death, they were buried at Peterborough; their relics, happily found after the burning of the monastery and the massacre of all the monks by the Danes, were carried back there on its restoration, and continued to be venerated there down to the twelfth century.

A third daughter of the terrible Penda, Eadburga, was also a nun, and became abbess at Dormuncester, according to the English martyrology. Her son Merwald, who did not reign, like his brothers, and never attained a higher rank than that of *subregulus* or ealdorman, married her who was after-

[1] GUILL. MALMESB., RICARD. CIRENCESTER, ALFORD, HARPSFELD, CAPGRAVE, &c. Pagi accepts this tradition: *Crit. in Baronium*, ad ann. 680.

[2] *Act. SS. Bolland.*, vol. i. March, p. 441. It is not known by what authority the author of the continuation of Dugdale makes Kyneburga the first abbess of the great monastery at Gloucester, the church of which, now a cathedral, is one of the most curious buildings in England.—STEVENS, i. 266.

wards Abbess of Minster, a union from which sprang the three holy sisters Milburga, Mildred, and Milgytha, whom we have just spoken of. Another son, Wulphere, who succeeded Penda on the throne of Mercia, had a saint for his wife, and of this marriage proceeded another holy saint, Wereburga, who was the fourth of the granddaughters of Penda whom grateful England placed upon her altars.

The wife of Wulphere, the son and successor of Penda, was Ermenilda, daughter of the King of Kent, and granddaughter, by her mother, of Anna, the King of East Anglia, who perished upon the battle-field defending his country and religion against the attacks of Penda.[1] This religion, henceforward triumphant, reconciled and united the posterity of the murderer and that of the victim. We thus come, through the essentially Christian and monastic dynasty of the Ascings of Kent to that of the Uffings of East Anglia, which was equally remarkable for the crowd of saints which it produced. King Anna, who married the sister of Hilda, the celebrated Abbess of Whitby, had a natural daughter, who was a nun in France, along with the daughter, by a former marriage, of her father's wife; both, as has been already said, were Abbesses of Faremoutier,[2] and both are reckoned among the saints.

The Uffings, or dynasty of East Anglia.

By his union with the sister of Hilda, King

[1] See above, vol. iv. p. 96.

[2] See above, page 243, and the genealogical table D.

The three daughters of King Anna, who died on the battle-field.

Anna had three daughters and a son. The son became in his turn the father of three daughters, two of whom were in succession Abbesses of the Monastery of Hackness, in Northumbria, founded by their grandaunt St Hilda, and the last, Eadburga, was that Abbess of Repton whom we have already encountered as the friend of the illustrious and generous hermit Guthlac.[1]

The three daughters of Anna—Etheldreda, Sexburga, and Withburga—are all counted among the saints. Let us speak, in the first place, of the latter, though she was the youngest of the three. She was sent to the country to be nursed, and remained there until she heard, while still quite young, the news of her father's death on the battle-field. She resolved immediately to seek a refuge for the rest of her life in cloistral virginity. She chose for her asylum a modest remnant of her father's lands at Dereham in Norfolk, and there built a little monastery. But she was so poor that she, her companions, and the masons who built her future dwelling, had to live on dry bread alone. One day, after she had prayed long to the blessed Virgin, she saw two does come out of the neighbouring forest to drink at a stream whose pure current watered the secluded spot. Their udders were heavy with milk, and they permitted themselves to be milked by the virginal hands of Withburga's companions, returning every day to the

[1] See above, p. 120.

same place, and thus furnishing a sufficient supply for the nourishment of the little community and its workmen.[1] This lasted until the ranger of the royal domain, a savage and wicked man, who regarded with an evil eye the rising house of God, undertook to hunt down the two helpful animals. He pursued them with his dogs across the country, but, in attempting to leap a high hedge, with that bold impetuosity which still characterises English horsemen, his horse was impaled on a post, and the hunter broke his neck.[2]

Withburga ended her life in this poor and humble solitude; but the fragrance of her gentle virtues spread far and wide. The fame of her holiness went through all the surrounding country. The worship given to her by the people of Norfolk was maintained with the pertinacity common to the Anglo-Saxon race, and went so far that, two centuries after her death, they armed themselves to defend her relics from the monks of Ely, who came,

[1] "Juxta mare cum sua nutrice in quodam vico paterni juris. Ad sanctimonialem confugit professionem, ubi in umbra alarum Dei sperans suaviter requievit. . . . In humilem locum paterni juris devenit. . . . Mittit ad fontem quo silva grato irrigatur fluvio. . . . Duæ assiliunt cervæ. . . . Has mulgebant manus virgineæ. . . . Præpositus ipsius villæ . . . adductis canibus nitebatur insontes feras captare."—BOLLAND., vol. ii. March, p. 606.

There still exists at East Dereham, a small parish in Norfolk, a well bearing the name of St Withburga. It is fed by a spring rising in the very place where the saint's body was laid before its translation to Ely.—*Notes and Queries*, third series, vol. iii. p. 247.

[2] The monastic chronicler describes the accident with all the spirit of a steeplechaser: "Equus in obstantem sepem urgentibus calcaribus incurrit, secusque acuta sude transfixus ilia, dum resiliendo tergiversaretur, sessor superbus supino capite excutitur, fractaque cervice exanimatur."

by the king's command, to unite them to those of her sisters at Ely.

Three generations of saints of the blood of Odin Abbesses at Ely.

To Ely, also, the monastic metropolis of East Anglia, and queen of English abbeys, we must transport ourselves to contemplate three generations of princesses issued from the blood of the Uffings and Ascings, and crowned by the nimbus of saints. There were, in the first place, the two Queens of Mercia and Kent, Etheldreda, whom our readers already know,[1] and her elder sister, Sexburga. This accomplished princess had married one of the Kings of Kent, the one who, after Ethelbert, had showed himself most zealous for the extension of the Gospel. It was she especially who moved him to destroy the last idols which still remained in his kingdom. After twenty-four years of conjugal life, she became a widow, and was regent for four years of the kingdom of her son. As soon as he was old enough to reign, she abdicated, not only the crown, but secular life, took the veil from the hands of Archbishop Theodore, and founded a monastery in the Isle of Sheppey, situated at the mouth of the Thames, and separated from the mainland by that arm of the sea in which Augustin, on Christmas-day 579, baptised at once ten thousand Saxons. This monastery took and kept the name of *Minster*, like that which was founded at the same time by her niece Domneva in the neighbouring Isle of Thanet. The church is

Sexburga, Queen of Kent.

640-664.

[1] See above, in the life of Wilfrid, vol. iv. p. 233.

still visible not far from the great roads of Sheerness, which has become one of the principal stations of the British navy. She there ruled a community of seventy-seven nuns, until she learned that her sister Etheldreda, having fled from the king her husband, according to the advice of Wilfrid, had taken refuge in the marshes of their native country, and had there formed a new asylum for souls resolute to serve God in solitude and virginity. Sexburga then resolved to return to her own country and become a simple nun under the crosier of her sister. "Farewell, my daughters," she said to her companions who were gathered round her, "I leave you Jesus for your protector, His holy angels for companions, and one of my daughters for your superior. . . . I go to East Anglia where I was born, in order to have my glorious sister Etheldreda for my mistress, and to take part immediately in her labours here below, that I may share her recompense above."

Abbess at Ely after her sister.

She was received with enthusiasm at Ely: the entire community out came to welcome her: and the two sister-queens wept with joy when they met. They lived together afterwards in the most sweet and tender union, rivalling each other in zeal for the service of God and the salvation of souls, Sexburga compelling herself always to take lessons of humility and fervour from her sister. When Etheldreda died, Sexburga replaced her as abbess, and ruled the great East Anglian monastery for twenty 679.

6th July 699. years before she too found her rest near the tomb which she had erected to her sister.[1]

Besides her two sons, who reigned over Kent in succession, Sexburga had two daughters, one of whom, Earcongotha, lived and died, as has been already seen, in a French monastery; the other, Ermenilda, married to the son and successor of Penda, became, along with the illustrious exile Wilfrid, the principal instrument of the final conversion of Mercia, the greatest kingdom of the Heptarchy. Like her mother, she used all the influence which the love of her husband gave her to extirpate the last vestiges of idolatry in the country which had been the centre and last bulwark of Anglo-Saxon heathenism.[2] The example of her virtues was the most effectual of sermons; and it was, above all, by her incomparable sweetness, her pity for all misfortune, her unwearied kindness, that she touched the hearts of her subjects most.[3] Like her mother, too, it was her desire to offer herself

Ermenilda, Queen of Mercia, Abbess of Ely after her mother.

[1] "Vobis, O filiæ, Jesum derelinquo tutorem, sanctosque angelos paranymphos. . . . Ego gloriosæ sororis meæ magisterio informanda. . . . Regina reginam excepit, soror sororem cum tripudio introducit, fundunt ubertim præ gaudio lacrymas, et ex vera caritate inter eas lætitia germinatur. Cœlesti namque dulcedine delectatæ alterna invicem consolatione proficiunt. Venit dives illa de prælatione ad subjectionem. . . . Federatæ invicem beatæ sorores in unitate fidei."—*Historia Eliensis*, l. i. c. 18, 35.

[2] "Nec quievit invicta, donec idola et ritus dæmoniacos extirparet. . . . Rex . . . sanctis uxoris desideriis, petitionibus ac monitis ultro se inclinans."—JOANN. BROMPTON, ap. BOLLAND, vol. ii. February, p. 687. See above, vol. iv. p. 191.

[3] "Ad omnem pietatem, compassionem et omnium necessitudinum subventionem materna viscera ante omnia induebat. Eadem in omnibus benignitas, in Christo caritas erat."—*Ibid.*, p. 691.

entirely to God, to whom she had finally led back her people: as soon as she became a widow, she took the veil like her mother, and under her mother—for it was to Ely that she went to live in humility and chastity, under a doubly maternal rule. The mother and daughter contended which should give the finest examples of humility and charity.[1] At last, and still following in her mother's steps, Ermenilda, on the death of Sexburga, became abbess, and was thus the third princess of the blood of the Uffings who ruled the flourishing community of Ely. The local chronicle affirms that it was not her birth but her virtues, and even her love of holy poverty, which made her preferred to all others by the unanimous suffrages of her numerous companions.[2] She showed herself worthy of their choice: she was less a superior than a mother. After a life full of holiness and justice, her soul went to receive its eternal reward in heaven, and her body was buried beside those of her mother and aunt in the church of the great abbey which had thus the singular privilege of having for its three first abbesses a Queen of Northumbria, a Queen of Kent, and a Queen of Mercia.

[1] "Contendebant alterutra pietate mater et filia, quæ humilior, quæ possit esse subjectior: mater sibi præferebat ejus, quam genuerat, virginitatem; virgo matris auctoritatem: utrinque et vincere et vinci gaudebant."—GOTSELINUS, *Vita S. Wereburgæ*, ap. BOLLAND, vol. i. February, p. 388.

[2] "Voto unanimi et consensu totius congregationis . . . successit: quæ totius dominationis ambitione neglecta . . . ad Christi paupertatem, quam optaverat, pauper ipsa devenit. . . . A cunctis digne suscepta, totius mater congregationis effecta est. Transivit autem plena sanctitate et justitia ad regna cœlestia."

Were-burga, daughter of Ermen-ilda, fourth Abbess of Ely, of the same stock.

But this celebrated community was to be in addition the spiritual home of a fourth abbess and saint, in whom the blood of Penda and of Anna,[1] the victor and the vanquished, was blended. This was Wereburga, the only daughter of Ermenilda, who had not followed but preceded, her mother in the cloister.

These crowned Christians had learned in their palaces to despise wealth, luxury, and worldly pomp. They considered themselves prisoners of vanity.[2] Notwithstanding her beauty, which, like that of Etheldreda, is boasted by the annalists, Wereburga repulsed all her suitors. A monastery seemed to her the most noble of palaces. Following this impulse she went to her grandaunt Etheldreda at Ely, with the consent of her father, who himself took her there in state, accompanied by his royal suite. When her grandmother, Queen Sexburga, and her mother, Queen Ermenilda, followed her, three generations of princesses of the blood of Hengist and Odin were thus seen together, the grandmother, mother, and daughter, wearing the same monastic dress, and bound by the same rule for the service of God and man. Wereburga lived long as a humble and simple nun, fulfilling in her turn

[1] See genealogical tables B, C, and D.

[2] "Viluerant divitiæ tam matri quam filiæ: palatium habebant pro monasterio: aurum, gemmæ, vestes auro textæ, et quicquid fert pompatica mundi jactantia onerosa sibi magis erant quam gloriosa: et si forte his uti ad tempus regia compelleret dignitas, dolebant se potius vanitatis subjectas tanquam captivas."—*Act. SS. Bolland.*, Febr. vol. i. p. 387.

all the offices in the monastery, until the time when, after the death of her mother, she was called 699. to take the place of abbess.

Her uncle Ethelred, who, after a reign of thirty years, was to end his days in the cloister, was so struck with the prudence and capacity that were apparent, combined with holiness, in the character of Wereburga, that he intrusted her with a sort of supremacy, or rather a general right of inspection over the various nunneries in his kingdom.[1] It was in exercise of this office that, before entering on the government of Ely, she had been at the head of the communities of Weedon, Trentham, and Hanbury in turn, leaving everywhere a fragrance of virtue and kindness, and recollections of her constant solicitude for the benefit of all, which made her memory dear to the people, and of which as usual legendary lore has taken possession. Of all the incidents that adorn her biography we will quote one only, which explains better than any other the popularity of her memory. It happened one day that a shepherd on the monastic lands of Weedon, a man distinguished by his holy life, was treated by the steward with that savage brutality which the modern English too often borrow from their Anglo-

[1] "Cum formæ pulchritudo insigniter responderet generositati suæ, cœpit speciosa facie cum speciosissima mente ad eum . . . contendere. . . . Procos et amatores regificos angelica pudicitia repulit. . . . Virginalis B. Wereburgæ pudicitia, mox ut valuit, hæc vincula exuit. . . . Tradidit ei monasteriorum sanctimonalium quæ in suo regno pollebant principatum."—BOLLAND., vol. i. February, p. 387, 388.

Saxon ancestors. At this sight the niece of the sovereign of Mercia, the granddaughter of the terrible Penda, threw herself at the feet of the cruel steward. "For the love of God," she said, "spare this innocent man; he is more pleasing in the eyes of God, who from the heights of heaven regards all our actions, than either you or I." The wretch paid no attention to her, and she began to pray, continuing until the steward, paralysed and distorted by miraculous strength, had in his turn to appeal to the intervention of the saint that he might be restored to his natural condition.[1]

At the death of Wereburga the population in the neighbourhood of the monastery where she died and where she was to be buried, fought for the possession of her body, an event which began to be customary at the death of our holy nuns. Two centuries later, in order to save her dear remains from the Danes, the *Ealdorman* of Mercia had them carried to Chester, a city already celebrated in the times of the Britons and Romans, and where a great abbey, with a church which is now admired among the fine cathedrals of England, rose over her tomb.

To complete this list of Anglo-Saxon princesses

[1] "Amentarius, vir piæ conversationis et quantum licuit sub humana servitute sanctæ vitæ. . . . Nunc villicus dominæ cum forte laniaret cruentissimo verbere . . . proruit ad pedes indignos lanistæ. . . . Parce, pro Dei amore, quare excarnificas hominem innocentem. . . . Continuo dura cervix et torva facies in terga illi reflectitur."—*Ibid.*, p. 389.

whose cloistral education and vocation have been revealed to us by the worship of which they were the object, it now remains to say a few words of the nuns who proceeded from the race which a century later was to absorb all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, and form the political unity of England. This race of Cerdic, the founder of the kingdom of Wessex, has already given us an essentially monastic figure in the person of the legislator King Ina,[1] who, in the midst of a prosperous and glorious reign, gave up his crown and went to Rome to become a monk. It was his wife Ethelburga, as may be remembered, who, by a scene cleverly arranged, prepared him to leave his kingdom, his country, and the world. She alone never left him; she accompanied him in his voluntary exile, and at his death returned to become a nun at Barking, in England.

Nuns of the race of Cerdic in Wessex.

Beside the wife of Ina, and, like her, of the blood of Cerdic,[2] the two sisters of the king, Coenburga[3] and Cuthburga, take their place in monastic annals, both devoted to religious life, and reckoned among the English saints. The latter is much the most celebrated of the two. She was married young to the learned and peaceful Aldfrid, King of

St Cuthburga, sister of King Ina

[1] See above, p. 127, and the genealogical table E.

[2] "Regii generis femina de Cerdici prosapia regis oriunda."—GUILL. MALMESB.

[3] Placed by the Bollandists (vol. iv. Sept., die 12) among the *prætermissi*, because her adoration does not appear to them certain, though she is named in a crowd of martyrologies. Cf. PAGI, *Crit. in Annal.* BARONII, ad. ann. 705.

Northumbria, whose important influence on the life of Wilfrid has been already seen, and was, like her sister-in-law Etheldreda, struck upon the throne by the thunderbolt of divine love, and in the lifetime of her husband desired to give up conjugal life and her royal state to consecrate herself to the service of God in the cloister. Less tender or less violent than his brother Egfrid, King Aldfrid consented to
700-705. the separation,[1] and Cuthburga took the veil in the Monastery of Barking, on the Thames, in the kingdom of East Anglia. This house, which had been founded some time before by a holy bishop of London for his sister, in whom he had recognised a soul destined to govern those who gave themselves to God,[2] was already celebrated, not only for the fervour of its nuns, but by the zeal they displayed for the study of the Holy Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, and even the classic tongues. The
Foundress of Winbourne. 705. sister of Ina remained there only a few years. Her brother desired her to become the superior of a great foundation belonging to their race and country. He established her at Winbourne, in a

[1] "Ante finem vitæ suæ connubio carnalis copulæ ambo pro Dei amore renunciavere." — FLORENT. WIGORNENSIS. Cf. BOLLAND., vol. vi. August, p. 696.

[2] "In quo ipsa Deo devotarum mater ac nutrix posset existere feminarum, quæ suscepto monasterii regimine, condignam se in omnibus episcopo fratre, et ipsa recte vivendo et subjectis regulariter et pie consulendo præbuit."—BEDE, iv. 6. This bishop was called Earconwald, and his sister Edilberga or Ethelburga. She must not be confounded with the widow of King Ina, who afterwards was a nun, and even abbess at Barking. The bishop himself became a monk at Chertsey, another monastery also founded by him on the banks of the Thames.

very fertile country,[1] near the royal residence of the kings of Wessex, and not far from the sea which washes the shores of the district now called Dorsetshire. The Queen of Northumbria, when she became abbess of the new community, carried with her the spirit and habits of her first monastic dwelling-place, and Winbourne soon became still more celebrated than Barking for the great development of its literary studies.

Frideswida, a West Saxon princess, becomes a nun in spite of the opposition of her friends; and her monastery is the cradle of the University of Oxford.

But before we discuss briefly the singular birth of ecclesiastical and classical literature among the Anglo-Saxon nuns, and before we leave the country of Wessex, which gave to the English their first monarch, Egbert, and to the Teutonic world its most illustrious apostle, Boniface, a place must be reserved for the touching and popular story of Frideswida, foundress and patron of Oxford—that is to say, of one of the most celebrated literary and intellectual centres of the universe. She was the daughter of one of the great chiefs of the country, to whom the legend gives the title of king, or at least of *subregulus*, and was, like all the heroines of Anglo-Saxon legend, sought in marriage by another king or chief called Algar, more powerful than her father, whose alliance she obstinately refused in order to consecrate herself to religious life. The prince, carried away by his

[1] "Quod Latine interpretatur *vini fons* dici potest, quia propter nimiam claritatem et saporem eximium quo cæteris terræ illius aquis præstare videbatur, hoc nomen accepit."—RODOLPHI, *Vita S. Liobæ*, ap. *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, sæc. iii. p. 2.

passion, resolved to seize on her by force. To escape from his pursuit she threw herself, like Bega, into a boat, not to cross the sea, like the Irish princess, but to put the Thames between herself and her lover. After proceeding for ten miles on the river, she landed on the borders of a forest, where she hid herself in a sort of hut covered with ivy, but intended in the first place for the swine which, then as later, went to eat the acorns in the woods, and were one of the principal riches of the Anglo-Saxon proprietors.[1] It was not a secure refuge for her. Algar, growing more and more in earnest, tracked her everywhere, with the intention of sacrificing her to the brutality of his companions as well as to his own. But at the moment when, exhausted with weariness, she was about to fall into his hands, she bethought herself of the great saints who, from the earliest days of the Church, had defended and saved their virginity at the price of their life. She invoked Catherine, the most illustrious martyr of the Eastern Church, and Cecilia, the sweet and heroic Roman whose name, inserted in the canon of the mass, was already familiar to all the new Christians. Her prayer was granted. God struck the savage Anglo-Saxon with sudden blindness, which put an end to his furious pursuit.

From this incident sprang a wild but obstinate tradition, according to which the kings of England

[1] See the first chapter of *Ivanhoe*.

for several centuries carefully avoided living or even passing by Oxford, for fear of losing their eyesight.[1] Frideswida, thus miraculously saved, obtained by her prayers the restoration of sight to her persecutor; then, with her father's consent, and after some years passed in solitude, she founded near Oxford, at the spot of her deliverance, a monastery where a crowd of Saxon virgins ranged themselves under her authority, and where she ended her life, dying in the same year as the venerable Bede, and consoled 735.
during her last sufferings by the apparition of the two virgin martyrs, St Catherine and St Cecilia, to whom she had once so successfully appealed.

The tomb of Frideswida, the chapel she erected in the depth of the wood where she had hidden herself, the fountain which sprang at her prayer, attracted up to the thirteenth century a crowd of pilgrims, who were led thither by the fame of the miraculous cures there performed. But of all the miracles collected after her death, none is so touching as that which, told during her lifetime, contributed above everything else to increase the fame of sanctity with which she was soon surrounded. It

[1] "In derelicto porcorum mapali hædera obducto delituit. . . . Nec latibulum latere potuit amantem, nec cordis desidia obfuit, quin persequeretur fugitantem. . . . Ille vi agere intendit. . . . Lenonum ludibrio polluenda. . . . Puella jam de fuga desperans simulque pro lassitudine nusquam progredi potens. . . . Hinc innatus est horror regibus Angliæ, ut nec unus profecto successorum ejus Oxenfordiam præsumatur intrare." —LELAND, *Collectanea*, ap. DUGDALE, vol. i. p. 173. Cf. BOLLAND., vol. viii. Oct., p. 533-568. Henry III. was the first English king who disregarded this prejudice, and the misfortunes of his reign have been attributed to this presumption.

She kisses a young leper.

happened one day that an unfortunate young man, struck with leprosy, met her on the road : from the moment that he perceived her he cried, " I conjure you, virgin Frideswida, by the Almighty God, to kiss me in the name of Jesus Christ, His only Son." The maiden, overcoming the horror felt by all of this fearful disease, approached him, and after having made the sign of the cross, she touched his lips with a sisterly kiss. Soon after the scales of his leprosy fell off, and his body became fresh and wholesome like that of a little child.[1]

The church in which the body of Frideswida rests, and the monastery which she had founded, were the objects of public veneration and the gifts of many kings during the middle ages. It would occupy too much of our space to tell how this monastery passed into the hands of regular canons, and became one of the cradles of the celebrated University of Oxford. Unquestionably the first school which is proved to have existed on this spot, destined to so much literary fame, was attached to the sanctuary of our Anglo-Saxon princess.[2] Oxford and Westminster,[3] the two greatest names in the intellectual and social history of England, thus

[1] " Ecce inter turbam . . . adest juvenis immanissima lepra et pustulis toto deforatus (*sic*) corpore. . . . Adjuro te, virgo Frideswida, per Deum omnipotentem, ut des mihi osculum. . . . At illa caritatis igne succensa illico accessit. . . . Ore virginis os leprosi tangitur, et . . . statim caro ejus sicut caro parvuli efficitur."—BOLLAND., vol. viii. Oct., p. 565.

[2] OZANAM, *Notes Inédites sur l'Angleterre.*

[3] See above, vol. iii. p. 409.

both date from the monastic origin in which is rooted everything which was dear and sacred to old England.

The monastery of St Frideswida, transformed into a college by Cardinal Wolsey, is still, under the name of *Christ-Church*, the most considerable college in the University of Oxford. Her church, rebuilt in the twelfth century, is the cathedral of that city.[1] Her body, according to the common opinion, still rests there, and her shrine is shown; but it must be added that, under Elizabeth, and after the final triumph of Anglican reform, a commissioner of the Queen, who has himself related the fact in an official report, believed himself entitled to place beside the relics of Frideswida the body of a disveiled nun married to an apostate priest called Pietro Vermigli, who had been called to Oxford as a reformer and professor of the new doctrine. The commissioner mixed the bones of the saint and those of the concubine in such a manner that it was impossible to distinguish the one from the other, and placed them in a stone coffin, on which he engraved the words, now happily effaced, *Hic requiescit religio cum superstitione.*[2]

[1] The choir, with its superimposed arches, is specially admirable, as well as the tomb of Guitmond, first prior of the restored monastery in 1549, that of Sir Henry de Bath, Chief-Justice of England in 1251, and the graceful chapter-house of the thirteenth century. At Christ-Church resides the celebrated Dr Pusey, canon of the cathedral.

[2] See the learned and copious article of P. Bossue on St Frideswida, ap. BOLLAND., vol. viii. Oct., p. 553-556.

## III.

It may be a matter of surprise that there is nothing in the legend of St Frideswida, nor in the recollections of the early days of her foundation, to connect them with the incontestable traditions which prove the intellectual and literary development of the great nunneries in England, of which something has already been said. We return to the subject, were it only in passing, reserving to ourselves the power of going back upon it when it becomes time to discuss the colonies of learned nuns who, issuing from their insular beehives, lent effectual aid to St Boniface and the other Anglo-Saxon missionaries of Germany.

It is proved by numerous and undoubted witnesses that literary studies were cultivated during the seventh and eighth centuries in the female monasteries with no less care and perseverance than in the communities of men, and even perhaps with more enthusiasm. Was this, as has been supposed, a consequence of the new spirit which Archbishop Theodore had brought from Greece and Italy, and with which he had inspired all the monastic Church of England? or was it rather a tradition of Frankish Gaul, where the first Anglo-Saxon nuns had been educated, and where the example of Radegund and her companions shows us to what

a degree classical habits and recollections found an echo in cloisters inhabited by women alone?[1]

At all events it is apparent that the Anglo-Saxon nuns interpreted the obligation to work which was imposed on them by their rule, to occupy the time which remained after the performance of their liturgical duties, as applying specially to study. They did not neglect the occupations proper to their sex, as is apparent by the example of the priestly vestments embroidered for Cuthbert by the abbess-queen Etheldreda. They even improved the art of embroidery in gold and silver stuffs, ornamented with pearls and jewels, for the use of the clergy and the church, so much, that the term "English work" (*opus Anglicum*) was long consecrated to this kind of labour. But the work of the hand was far from satisfying them. They left the distaff and the needle, not only to copy manuscripts and ornament them with miniatures, according to the taste of their time, but above all to read and study the holy books, the Fathers of the Church, and even classic authors. All, or almost all, knew Latin. Convent corresponded with convent in that language. Some of them became acquainted with Greek. Some were enthusiastic for poetry and grammar, and all that was then adorned with the name of science. Others devoted themselves more readily to the study of the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the New Testament, taking for guides the commen-

[1] See above, vol. ii. p. 300.

taries of the ancient doctors, and seeking out historical, allegorical, or mystic interpretations for the most obscure texts.[1] It has been made apparent by what was said in respect to the cowherd Ceadmon, transformed into a poet and translator of Holy Scripture, to what extent the study of the Bible had been cultivated at Whitby under the reign of the great Abbess Hilda.[2]

Each community of women was thus at once a school and workshop, and no monastic foundation is to be met with which was not, for nuns as well as for monks, a house of education, in the first place for the adults, who formed its first nucleus, and afterwards for the young people who crowded around them.[3] Thus were trained the cultivated nuns who quoted Virgil in writing to St Boniface, and too often added Latin verses, of their own fashion, to their prose;[4] who copied for him the works he had need of, now the Epistles of St Peter in gilded letters, now the Prophets writ large to suit weak sight;[5] who consoled and nourished him in his exile by

[1] MABILLON, *Annal. Bened.*, vol. ii. p. 143; LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 193; and especially KARL ZELL, who, in a recent work, *Lioba und die frommen Angelsächsischen Frauen* (Fribourg, 1860), has most conscientiously treated of all that regards the studies and the whole life of the Anglo-Saxon nuns.

[2] See above, vol. iv. p. 66.

[3] The following is said of St Cuthbert's foundation at Carlisle (see above, vol. iv. p. 290): "Ubi sanctimonalium congregatione stabilita . . . in profectum divinæ servitutis scholas instituit."—SIMEON DUNELMENSIS, i. 9.

[4] S. BONIFACII ET LULLI *Epistolæ*, No. 13, 23, 148, 149; ed. Jaffé.

[5] *Ibid.*, No. 13, 32, 55.

the abundance and beauty of the books they sent him; and among whom he found those illustrious fellow-workers, whom one of his biographers declares to have been deeply versed in all liberal studies,[1] and who lent so stout a hand in the conversion of the Germans.

Intellectual life at Barking under Abbess Hildelida.

But the example most frequently quoted is that of Barking, where we have seen the wife and sister of Ina, the Queen of Northumbria and the Queen of Wessex, take the veil in succession, the one during the lifetime, the other after the death of her husband. The abbess of this convent was Hildelida, whose wise administration and holy life, prolonged to a very advanced age,[2] have been celebrated by Bede, and to whom her friendship with St Aldhelm and St Boniface gave additional fame. It was to her and her community that the famous Abbot of Malmesbury dedicated his *Praise of Virginity*, composed at first in prose, and which was rewritten in verse at a later period. In this dedication, he names, besides the Abbess and Queen Cuthburga, eight other nuns, who were bound to him by ties of blood or of intimate friendship, whose holy fame seemed to him an honour to the Church, and whose many and affectionate letters filled him with joy.[3]

[1] Othlo, *De Vita et Virtutibus S. Bonifacii*, p. 490.

[2] "Devota deo famula . . . usque ad ultimam senectutem eidem monasterio strenuissime, in observantia disciplinæ regularis et in earum quæ ad communes usus pertinent rerum providentia præfuit."—*Hist. Eccles.*, iv. 10. Cf. S. Bonifacii *Epist.*, 10, ed. Jaffé.

[3] "Nec non Osburgæ contribulibus necessitudinum nexibus congluti-

This treatise, like all the other important writings of Aldhelm, is very uninviting to the reader, being full of pedantry and emphasis. But it is very interesting to all who desire to realise the ideas and images which one of the most holy and learned pontiffs of the Anglo-Saxon Church naturally appealed to, in addressing himself to the nuns of his own country and time. He quotes to them all the great examples of virginity which the Old and New Testaments could supply, or which were to be found in the lives of the Fathers and Doctors, and especially in the history of the martyrs of both sexes. But he also quotes to them Virgil and Ovid, and among others the well-known line—

"Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum;"

and that from the *Epithalamium*—

"Mellea tunc roseis hærescunt labia labris."[1]

He does not confine himself to a commonplace image, by describing them as bees who seek their honey from the most different flowers. He compares them now to athletes in the circus, taking advantage of the metaphor to make an enumeration of all the Olympian games; now to warlike cohorts engaged in a desperate struggle against what he calls the eight great vices; and anon he borrows his images and exhortations from military life,

natis, Aldgidæ ac Scholasticæ, Hildburgæ et Burngidæ, Eulaliæ ac Teclæ, rumore sanctitatis concorditer Ecclesiam ornantibus."—*De Laudibus Virginitatis*, p. 1, ed. Giles.

[1] *De Laudibus Virginitatis*, c. 35.

always mixing, in his singular Latin, modes and turns of expression which are essentially Greek, and which presuppose, among several at least of his correspondents, a certain acquaintance with the Greek language. The last lines of his treatise breathe a touching humility and tenderness. He compares himself, a poor sinner who, still plunged in the waves of corruption, shows to others the perfect shore of the perfect land, to a deformed painter who has undertaken to represent the features of beauty. "Help me, then, dear scholars of Christ," he says; "let your prayers be the reward of my work, and, as you have so often promised me, may your community be my advocates before the Almighty. Farewell, you who are the flowers of the Church, the pearls of Christ, the jewels of Paradise, the heirs of the celestial country, but who are also my sisters according to monastic rule, and my pupils by the lessons I have given you."[1]

His letters to other nuns.

Nor were the nuns of Barking the only ones to whom Aldhelm addressed the effusions of his unwearied pen, and his laboriously classic muse; and we are expressly told that the works he dedicated to them were very popular among all who followed the same career.[2] Many of his letters and poems are addressed to nuns whose names are not given,

[1] "Pulchrum depinxi hominem pictor fœdus, aliosque ad perfectionis litus dirigo, qui adhuc in delictorum fluctibus versor. . . . Valete, o flores Ecclesiæ, sorores monasticæ, alumnæ scholasticæ, Christi margaritæ, paradisi gemmæ, et cœlestis patriæ participes."—*Ibid.*, c. 60.

[2] "Berkingensium quidem nomini dedicata; sed omnibus eamdem professionem anhelantibus valitura."—GUILLELM. MALMESB., i. 35.

but of whom he begs not only intercession with God, but protection against criticism here below.[1] The communities who were honoured by his visits or by his correspondence took pleasure, no doubt, in his play on words, and in the Greco-Latin acrostics and verbal refinements with which the celebrated prelate adorned his prose and verse; and insignificant as this kind of production appears to us now, it implies nevertheless a certain degree of literary culture generally diffused throughout the Anglo-Saxon cloisters.

But the interest which attaches to this revelation of an intellectual movement among the Anglo-Saxon nuns is increased when it is remarked that intellectual pursuits, though intensely appreciated, were far from holding the first place in the heart and spirit of these new aspirants to literary glory. The salvation of souls and the tender union of hearts carried the day over all the rest. In a letter written to an abbess distinguished by birth as well as by knowledge and piety, enclosing to her a series of leonine verses he had made on a journey he had taken into Cornwall, Aldhelm takes pains to demonstrate that he is specially inspired by a tender gratitude towards her who of all women has shown him the most faithful affection.[2] And

[1] "Sed vos virgineis comit quas infula sertis,
Hoc opus adversus querulos defendite scurras," &c.
—S. ALDHELMI *Opera*, p. 213, ed. Giles.

[2] "Nullam reperisse me istic habitantium feminini sexus personam fideliorem."—*Ibid.*, p. 104.

another called Osgitha, whom he exhorts to a careful study of the Holy Scriptures, he addresses as his beloved sister, ten times, and even a hundred, a thousand times beloved.[1]

Let us here take leave of Aldhelm and his learned correspondents, reminding our readers that one of his most important acts, that by which he consented to remain abbot of his three monasteries after his elevation to the episcopate, is dated from Winbourne,[2] which was the great feminine community of Wessex, founded by King Ina, and ruled by his sister Cuthburga. It was at the same time the monastery most famed for literary activity. The education of the young novices was the object of the most active and scrupulous care. Intellectual labour alternated with the works of the needle; but it is expressly said of Lioba, the nun whose name has thrown most lustre upon that community, the holy companion of Boniface in his German apostleship, that she devoted much more time to reading and studying the Holy Scriptures than to manual labour.[3] Let us also not forget that the development of spiritual fervour by prayer

[1] "Dilectissimæ atque amantissimæ sorori. . . . Saluto te diligenter, Osgitha, ex intimo cordis cubiculo. . . . Vale! decies dilectissima, imo, centies et millies."—*Ibid.*, p. 90.

[2] Ap. GILES, p. 351.—Cf. above, p. 43.

[3] "Crevit ergo puella et tanta abbatissæ omniumque sororum cura erudiebatur, ut nihil aliud præter monasterium et cœlestis disciplinæ studia cognosceret. . . . Quando non legebat, operabatur manibus ea quæ sibi injuncta erant. . . . Lectioni tamen atque auditioni sanctarum Scripturarum magis quam labori manuum operam impendit."—*Vita S. Liobæ*, auct. RUDOLPHO, c. 7, ap. *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, vol. iv.

and the continual celebration of the monastic liturgy, occupied much the greatest place in the employment of the time and strength of all these young and generous souls.

The five hundred nuns of Winbourne.

There were five hundred nuns at Winbourne, who were all present at the nightly service.[1] It is easy to imagine how much authority, intelligence, and watchfulness, were necessary to rule such a crowd of young souls, all, no doubt, inspired with the love of heaven, but all, at the same time, sprung from races too newly converted to have freed themselves from the characteristic features of Saxon pride and rudeness. This necessity explains why princesses of those ancient dynasties, whom the Anglo-Saxons were accustomed to follow even without always respecting them, were everywhere sought for as superiors of the great communities; and why, after the sister of King Ina, another sister of the king, Tetta,[2] was called to the government of Winbourne, at the time when Lioba was being educated there. Among the crowd of minor authorities who lent their aid to this zealous and pious abbess, was the provost (*præposita*), the deaconess (*decana*), the portress, whose business it was to close the church after complines, and to ring the bell for matins, and who

[1] *Vita S. Liobæ*, c. 5.

[2] "Huic ergo loco post nonnullas abbatissas et spiritales matres prælata est virgo religiosa nomine *Tetta*, genere quidem secundum sæculi dignitatem nobilis (soror quippe regis erat), morum autem probitate et sanctarum spectamine virtutum multo nobilior."—*Ibid.*, c. 2.

was furnished with an immense collection of keys, some of silver, others of copper or iron, according to their different destinations.[1] But neither the rank nor moral influence of the princess-abbess was always successful in restraining the barbarous impetuosity of that monastic youth. The nun who held the first rank among them after the abbess, and who was principally occupied with the care of the novices, made herself odious by her extreme severity: when she died, the hate which she inspired burst forth without pity: she was no sooner buried than the novices and young nuns rushed to the churchyard, and began to jump and dance upon her tomb, as if to tread under foot her detested corpse. This went so far that the soil, freshly filled in, which covered the remains of their enemy, sank half a foot below the level of the surrounding ground. The abbess had great trouble to make them feel what she called the hardness and cruelty of their hearts, and which she punished by imposing upon them three days of fasting and prayers for the deceased.[2]

The novices tread the tomb of their mistress under foot.

[1] *Vita S. Liobæ*, c. 5.

[2] "Nec tamen conquievit animus juvenum odientium eam, quin statim ut aspicerent locum in quo sepulta est, maledicerent crudelitati ejus; immo ascendentes tumulum, et quasi funestum cadaver conculcantes, in solatium doloris sui amarissimis insultationibus mortuæ exprobrarent. Quod cum mater congregationis venerabilis Tetta comperisset, temerariam juvencularum præsumptionem correptionis vigore compescens, perrexit ad tumulum et mirum in modum conspexit terram quæ desuper congesta erat subsedisse et usque ad semi pedis spatium infra summitatem sepulcri descendisse."—*Ibid.*, c. 3.

## IV.

Double monastery.

All that remains to be said of the strange but general institution of double monasteries—that is, two distinct communities of monks and nuns living together in the same place and under the same government—may be attached to the name of Winbourne. It is of all the establishments of this kind the one whose organisation is best known to us. We have already met with the institution in Frankish Gaul, with St Radegund and St Columbanus, at Poitiers, at Remiremont, and elsewhere. We shall find them again in Belgium and Germany as soon as the monastic missionaries shall have carried the light of the Gospel there. Their origin has been largely discussed,[1] and we do not pretend to give any decision on the subject. Examples may be found among the Fathers of the desert in Egypt and as far back as the times of St Pacome,[2] who, however, placed the Nile between the two communities under his government. We have already pointed out a remarkable attempt at the same institution in Spain caused by the prodigious crowd of monastic neophytes of both sexes who gathered round St

[1] MABILLON, *Ann. Bened.*, vol. i. p. 125; LANIGAN, *Eccles. Hist. of Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 19, 20; LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. i. 212; and above all VARIN, 2d *Memoir*, already frequently quoted.

[2] See vol. i. p. 309. Cf. PALLADIUS, *Hist. Lausiaca*, 30-42; BOLLAND., vol. iii. May, p. 304.

Fructuosus.[1] Notwithstanding the assertion of Muratori to the contrary, the unassailable testimony of Bede proves that there was at least one community of the same kind in Rome in the middle of the seventh century.[2]

These establishments, however, were more popular in Ireland than anywhere else, where they sprang spontaneously from the beginning of the conversion of the island, to such a point that the apostle of the country, St Patrick, saw himself obliged to forestall by wise precautions the disorders and scandals which might have arisen from the too close and frequent intercourse of the monks and nuns.[3] At the same time, the first pontiffs and missionaries of Hibernia, strong in the exceptional purity of the Irish temperament, which has continued to our own day the glorious privilege of the race, and strong above all in their own fervour and exclusive passion for the salvation of souls, feared neither the society of the women they had converted, nor the charge of governing them

[1] See above, vol. ii. p. 213.

[2] "Cum monachum quemdam de vicino *Virginum* monasterio, nomine Andream, pontifici offerret, hic ab omnibus qui novere, dignus episcopatu judicatus est."—*Hist. Eccl.*, vol. iv. p. 1. Muratori maintains that double monasteries have always been unknown in Italy.—*Antiquit. Medii Ævi*, vol. v. p. 527.

[3] "Sanxivit ut a mulieribus viri sequestrarentur, et utrique sua ædificia et oratoria distincta construerentur."—JOCELINUS, *Vit. S. Patr.*, ap. BOLLAND, p. 592. The ninth canon of the 2d council, which is attributed to him, is thus expressed: "Monachus et virgo, unus ab hinc et alia ab aliunde, in uno hospitio non commeant, nec in uno curru a villa in villam discurrant, nec assidue invicem confabulationem exerceant."—Ap. COLETTI, vol. iv. p. 754.

when they wished to devote themselves to God.[1] Less assured of themselves, if not more humble, their successors, those who are described as *saints of the second order* in the hagiographical annals of Ireland, declined the responsibility of administering the more or less numerous communities of virgins who grouped themselves around the older saints.[2] They carried this restriction so far as to refuse access to their retreat even to recluses who came to seek the viaticum from them.[3] However, the custom of combining the foundation, or at

[1] "Mulierum administrationem et consortia non respuebant: quia super petram Christi fundati, ventum tentationis non timebant." Original text quoted by Ussher. To this category of the saints there may be added Bishop Dega Maccaryl (already spoken of above, vol. iii. p. 89), who died in 589, and of whom it is said: "Confluxerunt undique ad eum sanctæ virgines, ut *sub ejus regula* degerent. . . . Moniales illas versus septentrionem ducens, in diversis locis diversa monasteria, in quibus cum alliis virginibus seorsum Deo servirent, eis, prout decuit, construxit."—BOLLAND, vol. iii. August, p. 660. It appears also that a neighbouring abbot reproached the holy bishop, "ut eum de susceptione virginum objurgaret."

There is also the case of the thirty girls enamoured of St Mochuda, who ended by becoming nuns under his authority, already mentioned, vol. iii. p. 91. And also that of St Monynna, the contemporary of St Patrick, who, with eight other virgins and a widow, went to the holy bishop Ibar, and "longo tempore sub ipsius disciplina cum multis aliis virginibus permansit."—BOLLAND, vol. ii. July, p. 291.

[2] "Pauci episcopi et multi presbyteri, diversas missas celebrabant, et diversas regulas; unum Pascha XIV. luna; unam tonsuram ab aure ad aurem; *abnegabant mulierum administrationem*, separantes eas a monasteriis."—Text quoted by Ussher.

[3] This is related of St Senanus, who, about 530, founded a monastery in an island at the mouth of the Shannon, where no woman was permitted to disembark:—

> "Cui præsul: quid feminis
> Commune est cum monachis?
> Nec te nec ullam aliam
> Admittemus in insulam."
>
> *Vita Rhythmica*, ap. LANIGAN, ii. 7.

least the administration, of nunneries, along with that of similar communities of men, continued to prevail. But as the holy abbots declined to undertake the charge of nuns, the conditions had to be reversed. From this fact, no doubt, arose the singular custom universally established from the seventh century, not in Ireland, where I can find no example of it, but in all the Irish colonies, of two united communities, placed, not the nuns under the rule of an ecclesiastic, but the monks under that of the abbess of their neighbouring nuns.

Such was the state of things in the foundations which we have seen develop under the influence of St Columbanus, the Irish apostle of the Gauls, in the Vosges, in the valley of the Marne and of the Seine; and such too are the conditions which we shall find in Belgium when we consider the monastic influence of the Irish and Britons there. The Anglo-Saxon princesses devoted to the cloister found this custom established in the houses where they received their monastic education in Gaul, at Faremoutier, les Andelys, Chelles, and Jouarre,[1] and brought it into England, where it was immediately adopted; for of all the great nunneries of which we have spoken, not one was without a monastery of clerks or priests placed at the gates of the community of nuns, and ruled by their abbess.[2] Let us recall only Whitby, where the

[1] Bede, iii. 8. Mabillon, *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, i. 420, iii. 20.

[2] "Erat eo tempore monasteriis feminarum, amplis præsertim ac numer-

Princess Hilda directed the monastery-school, the nursery of so many bishops and missionaries, but of which the cowherd-poet Ceadmon, so often quoted, remains the principal celebrity;[1] and Ely, where Queen Etheldreda attracted by her example, and arrayed under her authority, not only holy priests, but even men of elevated rank in secular life.[2] No doubt the necessity of providing for the spiritual wants, in the first place, of the numerous nuns who filled these monasteries, and of the lay population spread over the vast lands which the foundress, generally a princess of the reigning dynasty, conferred upon her community, contributed more than anything else to the extension of so singular a custom. The priests and clerks charged with this double mission found themselves naturally collected in a sort of community under the authority of her who was at once the spiritual superior and the lady—the seigneuress, if such a word may be used—of the monastic lands.[3] The whole together formed a sort of vast family, governed by a mother instead of a father, maternity being the natural form of authority—all the more so as the neophytes were often admitted with all their dependants, as was Ceadmon, who entered Whitby

osis, conjuncta virorum, qui iis sacra administrarent, et familiam reliquam erudirent: eidem tamen abbatissæ omnes obediebant."—BOLLAND., *De S. Cedmono*, vol. ii. February, p. 552.

[1] See vol. iv. p. 66.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 242. Another instance is that of Repton, where St Guthlac became a monk under the Abbess Elfrida. See p. 117 of this volume.

[3] LINGARD, *Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 212.

with all belonging to him, including a child of three years old, whom Bede describes as being nursed and cared for in the cell of the learned nuns of Barking.[1]

The Greco-Asiatic Archbishop Theodore, when he came from Rome to complete the organisation of the Anglo-Saxon Church,[2] does not appear to have relished this institution, which was not unknown to the Christian East, but which had probably left equivocal recollections behind it. In one of his charges he forbids all new foundations of this description, though respecting those which already existed.[3] But like so many other canons and decrees, his prohibition was disregarded; communities founded after his death, like Winbourne, were in full flower in the eighth century, and nothing indicates that double monasteries had ceased to flourish up to the general destruction of monasteries by the Danes at the end of the ninth century. They were swept away by that calamity, and no trace of them is to be found in the monastic revival of which King Alfred and the great Abbot Dunstan were the authors. It was a peculiarity belonging to the youth of the Church, which, like

[1] "Cædmon . . . susceptum in monasterium cum omnibus suis fratrum cohorti associavit."—*Hist. Eccl.*, iv. 24. "Puer trium circiter annorum . . . qui propter infantilem adhuc ætatem in virginum Deo dedicatarum solebat cella nutriri, ibique medicari."—*Ibid.*, iv. 8. We meet with many examples of a mother and daughter or two sisters being dedicated to God in the same convent.—Cf. BEDE, v. 3.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 201.

[3] "Non licet viris feminas habere monachas, neque feminis viros, tamen non destruamus illud quod consuetudo est in hac terra."—*Capitula et Fragmenta*, ap. THORPE, *Ancient Laws and Institutes*, p. 307.

youth in all circumstances, went through all the difficulties, dangers, storms, and disorders of nature proper to that age, which disappear in maturer times.

This institution, however, is a new and very striking proof of the power of woman in the social order, a fact which we have already pointed out, following the example of Tacitus, both among the Germans and Britons.[1] Maintained, consolidated, and, in certain respects, sanctified by the Christian spirit among the Anglo-Saxons, it has remained very powerful in the race. It has produced that deference at once official and popular for the weaker sex, and, I willingly add, that public modesty of which the Anglo-Saxons of the present day in the United States give us so brilliant and honourable an example in their primary schools for boys, directed often in the midst of great cities, by young girls, who are protected against all outrage, and even all sarcasm, by the universal respect of both fathers and sons.[2]

Let us hasten to add that even at this primitive period no trace of the abuses or disorders which the suspicious spirit of modern criticism might summon into being, are to be found. This is explained by the precautions everywhere to be met with when double monasteries existed, and which seem never to have been discontinued. The double family lived

[1] "Neque enim sexum in imperio discernunt."—*Agric.*, c. 16. "Solitum Britannis feminarum ductu bellare."—*Annal.*, xiv. 35.

[2] EMILE DE LAVELEYE, *De l'Instruction Publique en Amérique*, confirmed by the accounts of all impartial travellers.

separately, in two buildings entirely distinct,[1] though near. As a general rule the nuns did not leave their cloister, and the monks were strictly forbidden to enter the enclosure reserved to the nuns, without the permission of the abbess, and the presence of several witnesses. At Winbourne, which must always be quoted as the type of establishments of this description, the two monasteries rose side by side, like two fortresses, each surrounded by battlemented walls. The austerity of primitive discipline existed in full vigour at the time when Lioba, who was destined, under the 720-748. auspices of St Boniface, to introduce conventual life among the women of Germany, resided there. The priests were bound to leave the church immediately after the celebration of mass, bishops themselves were not admitted into the nunnery, and the abbess communicated with the external world, to give her orders to her spiritual and temporal subjects, only through a barred window.[2]

Coldingham is the only great community of this kind mentioned in history, the memory of which

[1] "Multi de fratribus ejusdem monasterii qui aliis erant in ædibus" (BEDE, iii. 8), regarding Faremoutier. "Eam monasterii partem, qua ancillarum Dei caterva a virorum erat secreta contubernio" (*Ibid.*, iv. 7), as to Barking.

[2] "Porro ipsa congregationis mater, quando aliquid exteriorum pro utilitate monasterii ordinare vel mandare necesse erat, per fenestram loquebatur, et inde decernebat quæcumque ordinanda aut mandanda utilitatis ratio exigebat. . . . Virgines vero cum quibus ipsa indesinenter manebat, adeo immunes a virorum voluit esse consortio, ut non tantum laicis aut clericis, verum etiam ipsis quoque episcopis in congregationem earum negaret ingressum."—*Vita S. Liobæ*, auct. RUDOLPHO, c. 2, ap. *Acta SS. O. S. B.*, sæc. iii. p. 2.

is not irreproachable, a fact which has been already mentioned in treating of the historical position of the Northumbrian princess, Ebba, foundress of that house.[1] It must, however, be fully granted that the scandals pointed out by the severe and sincere Bede are not such as we might be tempted to expect; they are rather failures in obedience to the cloistral rule, than any infringements of Christian morality. These scandals, besides, whether small or great, were gloriously atoned for in the following century, when, under another Ebba, the nuns of Coldingham, to escape from the brutality of the Danish conquerors, cut off their noses and lips, and by their heroic self-mutilation added the palm of martyrdom to that of virginity.[2]

With this single exception, the unanimous testimony of contemporary authors, as well as of more recent annalists, does full homage to the obedience to rule, the fervour, and even austerity of the double monasteries among the Anglo-Saxons. A great number of the most illustrious female saints, and prelates most distinguished by their virtues and knowledge, were educated in these communities, which were surrounded by universal veneration, and whose pure fame was never tarnished by the breath of calumny.[3]

[1] See vol. iv. p. 77.

[2] "Exemplum . . . non solum sanctimonialibus illis proficuum, verum etiam omnibus successuris virginibus æternaliter amplectendum."—MATTH. WEST., ROG. WENDOV., RIC. CIRENC., ii. 70.

[3] LINGARD, *l. c.*

Is this to say that all was perfect in the monastic institutions of the country and time which I have undertaken to bring to the knowledge of the world? God forbid that I should thus attempt to deceive my readers. The more I advance in my laborious and thankless task—that is to say, the nearer I approach to my grave—the more do I feel mastered and overpowered by an ardent and respectful love of truth, the more do I feel myself incapable of betraying truth, even for the benefit of what I most love here below. The mere idea of adding a shadow to those which already shroud it, fills me with horror. To veil the truth, to hide it, to forsake it under the pretence of serving the cause of religion, which is nothing but supreme truth, would be, in my opinion, to aggravate a lie by a kind of sacrilege. Forgive me, all timid and scrupulous souls! But I hold that in history everything should be sacrificed to truth—that it must be always spoken, on every subject, and in its full integrity. The lying panegyric, where truth is sacrificed merely by leaving out what is true, is quite as repugnant to me as the invectives of calumny.

The abuses of the Anglo-Saxon monasteries.

I have therefore sought with conscientious care for evidences of all the abuses and disorders which could exist in English monasteries, and especially in nunneries. If I have found almost nothing, it is not for want of having thoroughly searched through the historians and other writers of the time. I may then venture to conclude that evil, which is insepar-

able from everything human, has left fewer traces in the Anglo-Saxon cloisters than elsewhere.

Luxury in dress.

I hesitate to insist with the same severity which was shown by the pontiffs and doctors of the time on the first of their complaints against the Anglo-Saxon communities, the excessive liking for rich and fine stuffs, in which certain nuns loved to dress themselves after having made them. These wonders of the distaff and broidery-needle, as they were used in the English cloisters, excited not only the anxiety but the indignation of the masters of spiritual life. Bede found nothing more serious to note in the transgressions which were to draw down the wrath of heaven upon Coldingham.[1] Boniface, when he became archbishop and pontifical legate in Germany, did not hesitate to indicate this as one of the greatest dangers of monastic life.[2] Aldhelm exerts all his rhetoric to preserve his friends at Barking from the revolting luxury displayed by the clergy of both sexes in their vestments, and especially by the abbesses and nuns, who wore scarlet and violet tunics, hoods and cuffs trimmed with furs and silk; who curled their hair with a hot iron all round their foreheads; who changed their veil into an ornament, arranging it in such a way as to make

[1] "Texendis subtilioribus indumentis operam dant, quibus at seipsas ad vicem sponsarum in periculum sui status adornent, aut externorum sibi virorum amicitiam comparent. Unde merito . . . de cœlo vindicta flammis sævientibus præparata est."—*Hist. Eccl.*, iv. 25.

[2] "Ut clericos et sanctimoniales de tenuitate et pompa vestium argueret."—GUILL. MALMESB., c. 82, p. 115. See above the text of the letter.

it fall to their feet; and who, finally, sharpened and bent their nails so as to make them like the claws of falcons and other birds of prey, destined by nature to chase the vermin upon which they feed.[1]

The Council of Cloveshove, however, justified 747.
these accusations by ordaining the monks and nuns to keep to the costume of their predecessors, and in particular to recall to their minds the simple and pure dress which they put on in the day of their profession, that they might no longer resemble by a too gay exterior the women of the world.[2]

Let us pass on to facts of a graver nature. Do we not meet on our path some of those disorders which, in modern times, the religious orders have been accused of as unpardonable crimes? Has compulsion never been employed to impose monastic life upon the young Anglo-Saxons? I am led to suppose that such a thing must sometimes have occurred when I read in the *Penitentiary* of Archbishop Theodore that daughters whom their parents had compelled to become nuns should be

[1] "Subucula bissina, sive hyacinthea, tunica coccinea capitium et manicæ sericis clavate calliculæ rubricatis pellibus ambiuntur, anticæ frontis et temporum cicini calamistro crispantur, pulla capitis velamina candidis et coloratis mafortibus cedunt, quæ vittarum nexibus assutæ talo tenus prolixius dependunt, ungues ritu falconum et accipitrum, seu certe cavannarum (*sic*) quos naturaliter ingenita edendi necessitas instigat, obunca pedum fuscinula et rapaci ungularum arpigine alites et sorices crudeliter insectando grassari."—*De Laudibus Virginit.*, c. 58. Cf. c. 17 and 56.

[2] "Non debent iterum habere indumenta sæcularia, et ornatis et nitidis vestibus incedere, quibus laicæ puellæ uti solent."—Can. 28, ap. COLETTI, vol. viii. p. 331.

exempted from all punishment, even spiritual, if they married afterwards.[1]

Attempts on the modesty of nuns.

Was the virginal modesty of these *brides of the Lord*, which the Anglo-Saxons, surrounded by so much national and popular veneration, always respected by those who occupied the first rank in the newly-converted nations, and for that reason ought to have shown them an example?

I am obliged to admit that this was not the case. Contemporary documents of unquestionable authority prove that more than one Anglo-Saxon king seems to have taken special pleasure in seeking his prey among the virgins consecrated to God.[2] It is probable that the princes and nobles followed but too often the example of the kings. Besides divers incidents which have retained a place in history, the many provisions of the penal laws under the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman kings, from Alfred to Henry I., against the rape of nuns—even when followed by subsequent marriage—and other outrages to their modesty, prove that such crimes were sufficiently well known to exact habitual and energetic repression.[3] It is but too

[1] "Puellæ quæ *non parentum coactæ imperio*, sed spontaneo judicio, virginitatis propositum atque habitum susceperunt, si postea nuptias diligunt, prævaricantur, etiamsi consecratio non accesserit."—*Liber Pœnitentialis*, c. xvi. § 24, ap. THORPE, p. 282.

[2] See what is said above, quoting the epistles of St Boniface, as to Osred, King of Northumbria, and Ceolred and Ethelbald, Kings of Mercia.

[3] The laws of Alfred foresaw and punished offences against the purity of nuns by the following regulations:—

"§ 8. *De concubitu nunne.* Qui duxerit sanctimonialem ab ecclesia, sine licentia regis aut episcopi, amende de 120 sols;" half to the king,

easy to imagine the fascination with which men still half barbarians must have been attracted towards the crowds of young girls, often beautiful and of high lineage, always pure, well educated, and trained in the utmost delicacy to which civilisation then reached, who were gathered together in the spiritual fortresses which might guard them against the temptations of secular life, but were ineffectual to protect them from the assaults of the great ones of this earth, traditionally accustomed to sacrifice everything to the gratification of their passions.

Still more surprising and afflicting are the decrees given by the principal spiritual legislators of the country, the great archbishops, Theodore of Canterbury and Egbert of York, which foresee and punish transgressions of cloistral continence in which violence could have no part, and which lead us to suppose that such crimes might be committed even by those whose duty it was to watch over the purity of the sanctuary—those whose sacred character ought to have imposed upon them

half to the bishop "et ipsius ecclesiæ domino cujus monacha fuit." If she survives him "qui eam abduxit, nihil de pecunia ejus habeat." If she has a child "nihil inde habeat infans, sicut nec mater ejus."

"§ 18. Si quis nunnam, causa fornicationis, in vestes aut in sinum, sine licentia comprehendat, sit hoc duplo amendabile, sicut antea de laica decrevimus."—Ap. THORPE, p. 32, 34, fol. ed.

The same offence is punished by section 4 of King Edmond's ecclesiastical laws (940-946) by deprivation of Christian burial, "unless he make bot, no more than a man-slayer."

Art. 39 of the laws of the Council of Enham under Ethelred says, "If any one defile a nun, let him make bot deeply before God and the world." The law of Henry I., art. 73, *De nunne concubitu*, orders the culprit to go to Rome: "adeat Papam et consilium ejus scire faciat."

the strongest of all restraints—by priests and even bishops.[1] Let us state, however, that, at least during the period of which we have spoken, history reports no known incident which gives support to the humiliating provisions of the law; and we may add that Archbishop Theodore might have brought from his Eastern home the fear or recollection of certain excesses and corruptions which were strange to the character and habits of the northern nations, and have given them a place in his laws under the form of useful warnings. We should run the risk of falling into injustice and absurdity did we draw from such and such a provision of the penal code the conclusion that crimes thus stigmatised and punished were habitually committed by the nation which by its laws protested against them.[2]

[1] The *Liber Pœnitentialis* of Theodore (chap. xvi.) provides for the case where a layman "fornicationem iniretur cum multis . . . sanctimonialibus, *ita ut etiam numerum nesciat*," and condemns the culprit to ten years' fasting, three on bread and water. Chap. xviii., *De fornicatione clericorum*, gives twelve years of penance to a guilty bishop, ten to a priest, eight to a monk or deacon, five to a clerk. The nun is equally punished. If there are children, the penance is prolonged to fifteen, twelve, ten, eight, and six years.

The married layman "maculans se cum ancilla Dei:" six years, two with bread and water; seven years if he has a child; five if he is not married. His companion in guilt the same.

"§ 20. Si quis monacham quam ancillam Dei appellant, in conjugio duxerit, anathema sit."—Ap. THORPE, p. 282, 283.

"Monachus vel puella consecrata, si fornicati fuerint, septem annos jejunent."—ECGBERTI, Arch. Ebor., *Confessionale*, art. 13. Cf. ECGBERTI *Excerptiones*, No. 134 and 136.

[2] What, for example, would be thought of a historian who from the text of art. 310 of our Penal Code concluded that the offence it punishes was common in France?

Impartiality, besides, requires us to remind our readers of all that has been already said in respect to the abuses that had crept into the monastic order from the time of Bede; upon the false monasteries which were nothing but lands worked to the profit of lay donors, ridiculously tricked out in the title of abbot; and upon the false monks and nuns who inhabited these contraband monasteries, and lived there in every kind of disorder.[1] To these pretenders, who, notwithstanding their known character, bore nevertheless the title of *monachi* or *sanctimoniales*, are no doubt to be most generally imputed the excesses assailed in the ordinances of the English metropolitans and by the letters of St Boniface; and let us hope that the accusation conveyed in the terrible and untranslatable words of his letter to the King of Mercia, "*Illæ meretrices, sive monasteriales sive sæculares*,"[2] may be referred to the same class. Finally, it may be added that the great apostle, who was inspired at once by love of religion and desire for the honour of his

[1] We may here recall the passage already partially quoted: "Quod enim turpe est dicere, tot sub nomine monasteriorum loca (*sic*) hi qui monachicæ vitæ prorsus sunt expertes in suam ditionem acceperunt. . . . Vel majore scelere atque impudentia, qui propositum castitatis non habent, luxuriæ ac fornicationi deserviant, neque ab ipsis sacratis Deo virginibus abstineant."—BEDÆ *Epist. ad Ecgbert.*, c. 6.

[2] *Epistolæ* S. BONIFACII, No. 59, ed. Jaffé, p. 175. He says also, in a letter to Archbishop Egbert of York: "Inauditum enim malum est præteritis sæculis et in triplo vel quadruplo sodomitanam luxuriam vincens, ut gens Christiana . . . despiciat legitima matrimonia . . . et nefanda stupra consecratarum et velatarum feminarum sequatur."—*Ibid.*, No. 61.

country, spoke only by hearsay; that his most violent accusations are tempered by expressions of doubt; and that he never himself complained on his own authority of anything he had personally known or seen before his departure for Germany, but only what had been carried to him by report, more or less well founded, during the course of his missions in Germany.

## V.

The letters of St Boniface and his correspondents contain the most authentic information upon the state of souls in the Anglo-Saxon cloisters.

The correspondence of St Boniface, which is a precious and unique mine[1] of information as to the ideas and institutions of the Teutonic races at their entrance into Christianity, reveals to us besides, in many aspects, the spirit which reigned in the cloisters inhabited by Anglo-Saxon nuns. Before as well as after his apostolic career in Germany, Winefred, the most illustrious monk in Essex, kept up frequent and intimate intercourse with the most distinguished nuns of his country. The letters which he wrote to them, and those which he received from them, acquired a double interest after

[1] It may be remarked that the usefulness of this collection is greatly lessened by the mania of each of its editors (Würdwein in 1789, Giles in 1844, and Migne in 1863), subsequent to the first publication by Serrarius in 1605, for changing the order and numbering of the Epistles. We have adopted the numbers given in the last and extremely correct edition by Jaffé (*Monumenta Moguntina*, in *Bibliotheca Rerum Germanicarum*, vol. iii., Berolini, 1866), who thinks he has succeeded in introducing a certain chronological order entirely wanting in the older editions.

his departure for the yet unexplored regions in which martyrdom awaited him. Only a very small number of them remains to us; but the few which have been preserved suffice to afford us a glimpse of what was passing in the souls of these generous, intelligent, and impassioned women, whose life was passed in the shadow of monasteries, and among whom the great missionary found not only devoted sympathy, but the most active and useful assistants.

It is evident, in the first place, from this picture, that all was not happiness and gentleness in the cloister. We are all apt to exaggerate both in the past and present the peace and serenity of religious life amid the storms either of the ancient world, so violent, warlike, and unsettled, or of modern society, so frivolous in its emotions, so servile, and so changeable in its servility. We are right to look upon the cloister as a nest suspended amid the branches of a great tree shaken by the winds, or like the inner chamber of a vessel beaten by the waves. It is in the midst of the storm, yet in it there is shelter; a refuge always threatened, always fragile, always perishable, but still a refuge. Outside is the noise of the waves, the rain, and the thunder; at every moment destruction is possible, or even near. But in the mean time the soul is safe; it is calm, protected, preserved, and sails on with humble confidence towards the port. Such a joy is sufficiently tempered by the sense of in-

security to be safe from becoming in itself a danger, a temptation to laxity or to pride.

But in this nest and in this bark, preserved from external tempests, how many storms and perils and sunken rocks are within! Even in the midst of the most peaceful and best regulated community, what a trial is there in the daily death of individual will! in the long hours of obscurity and silence which succeed to the effort and impulse of sacrifice! and in the perpetual sacrifice, continually borne, continually renewed! A modern master of spiritual life has said, with severe clear-sightedness, "The continuity alone of the exercises, which, although varied, have always something in them that goes against human inclinations, *from the moment that they are done by rule and for the service of God*, becomes very fatiguing."[1] What a ray of pitiless light is thus thrown upon the weakness of the human heart! It accustoms itself to the rules, habits, and even to the most onerous obligations which have a purely earthly aim. But from the moment that it is a work for God, dislike appears. The difficulty must be met and surmounted day by day. This is the great exertion, and also the infinite merit, of cloistral life.

If this is the case even among our contemporaries, who have been so long fashioned by Christian

[1] Notice of the Société de la Sainte-Retraite, commenced at Fontenelles, in the diocese of Besançon, 1787, by M. Receveur, p. 19 of the text corrected in 1791.

education and discipline, what must have been the effect upon the Saxon maidens of the seventh and eighth centuries, sprung from a race still new and young in the ways of the Lord, and which was still so impetuous, so turbulent, so enamoured of its own strength, freedom, and untamed independence? To the material restraint, which, though voluntarily accepted, might well lie heavy upon them, were added other privations of which they had not perhaps calculated beforehand all the extent. Hence those restrained but incurable agitations, those cries of distress, those vague but ardent and impetuous desires, which break forth in the pages on which they poured out their hearts to the greatest and holiest of their countrymen.

Impassioned letters written by the nuns.

It is to be regretted that these candid and eager souls had recourse to Latin to express their emotions and confidences. If they had employed their native idiom instead of a language which, though not dead, since it is the language of spiritual life, must have cost them many efforts ere they became familiar with it, we should no doubt have seen their thoughts flow forth more freely, precipitating themselves in tumultuous waves, in abrupt movements, bearing the characteristic mark of a powerful and impassioned originality, like the verse of Ceadmon or the poem of Beowulf. Even under the artificial constraint imposed upon them by the use of Latin, the reader feels the swelling life and force of an original, sincere, and vehement nature.

The most striking peculiarity of these letters, in which unpractised hands reveal, in Latin more or less classical, and in superlatives more or less elegant, the agitations of their hearts, is the necessity they feel to express the tenderness, we might even say the passion, which animates them. The intensity of the affection which united some of them to each other, may be imagined from the tender enthusiasm of language with which they address the monk who has gained their confidence. Here is an example taken from a letter written to Winefred, after the first success of his mission in Germany, by the Abbess Bugga, who is supposed to have been the daughter of a king of Wessex, and who was consequently of the same race as her illustrious correspondent[1]:—

"I do not cease to thank God for all that I have learned by your blessed letter; that He has led you mercifully through so many unknown countries; that He has favourably inclined towards you the heart of the Pontiff of glorious Rome; that He has cast down before you the enemy of the Catholic Church, Radbod the Frisian. But I declare to you that no revolution of time, no human vicissitude, can change the state of my mind towards you, nor

[1] There are two, if not three, nuns of the name of Bugga, among Boniface's correspondents. We agree with the editor of *Notes* on the monastic tombs discovered at Hackness, p. 35, that the one here alluded to is the same whose ecclesiastical buildings are celebrated in the poem by St Aldhelm (MIGNE, *Patrology*, vol. lxxxix. p. 289), and to whom St Boniface wrote his letter 86, ed. Jaffé, commencing, "O soror carissima."

turn it from loving you as I am resolved. The fervour of love so inspires me, that I am profoundly convinced of arriving at certain repose by your prayers. I renew, then, my entreaties to you to intercede in favour of my lowliness with the Lord. I have not yet been able to obtain the *Passions of the Martyrs,* which you ask me for. I will get them as soon as I can. But you, dearest, send me, for my consolation, that collection of *Extracts* from the Holy Scriptures which you have promised me in your sweet letter. I beseech you to offer the oblation of the holy mass for one of my relations, called N., whom I loved above all. I send you by the bearer of these lines fifty sols and an altar-cloth ; I have not been able to procure anything better. It is a little gift, but is offered you with great love."[1]

Answers not less affectionate of Boniface and his companions.

Boniface and the companions of his mission were not less affectionate and unreserved in their epistolary communications with their sisters in religion. He wrote to those whom he hoped to draw to his aid, and associate with himself in his apostolic work, as follows : "To my venerable, estimable, and dearest sisters, Leobgitha, Thekla, and Cynegilda, and to all the other sisters who dwell with

[1] "Venerando Dei famulo . . . Bonifacio sive Wynfritho dignissimo Dei presbytero Bugga vilis vernacula, perpetuæ caritatis salutem. . . . Eo magis confiteor, quod nulla varietas temporalium vicissitudinum statum mentis meæ inclinare queat. . . . Sed ardentius vis amoris in me calescit, dum pro certo cognosco. . . . Et tu, mi carissimus (*sic*), dirige meæ parvitati ad consolationem, quod per dulcissimas litteras tuas promisisti."—*Epist.* 16.

you, and ought to be loved like you, in Jesus Christ, the salutations of an eternal affection. I conjure and enjoin you to continue to do what you have done in the past, and must do always, that is, pray God, who is the refuge of the poor and the hope of the humble, to deliver me from my necessities and temptations, I who am the last and least of all to whom the Church of Rome has intrusted the preaching of the Gospel. Implore for me the mercy of God that, at the day when the wolf comes, I may not fly like an hireling, but that I may follow the example of the good Shepherd, and bravely defend the sheep and the lambs, that is to say, the Catholic Church with its sons and daughters, against heretics, schismatics, and hypocrites. On your side, in these evil days, be not imprudent. Seek with intelligence to know the will of God. Act manfully with the strength given you by faith, but do all with charity and patience. Remember the Apostles and Prophets who have suffered so much, and received an eternal recompense."[1]

A still more tender confidence seems to inspire him when he writes to the abbesses of the great English communities, and especially to Eadburga, who was to succeed St Mildred in the government of the monastery founded by her mother upon the shore where St Augustin landed.[2] He calls her

[1] "Venerandis et amandis carissimis sororibus . . . æterne caritatis salutem obsecro et præcipio quasi filiabus carissimis. . . . Quia ultimus et pessimus sum omnium legatorum."—*Ep.* 91.

[2] See above, p. 260. The Abbess Eadburga only died in 751, four years

"blessed virgin and beloved lady, accomplished mistress of the monastic rule."[1] He entreats her to pray for him while he is beaten about by all the storms which he must brave in the midst of heathens, false Christians, false priests, and licentious clerks.[2] "Do not be displeased that I always ask the same thing. I must ask often for that which I desire incessantly. My troubles are daily, and each day thus warns me to seek the spiritual consolations of my brethren and sisters."[3]

As his task becomes more laborious his heart has more and more occasion to pour itself forth to his old friend. "To my beloved sister, the Abbess Eadburga, long interwoven with my soul by the ties of spiritual relationship. To my sister Eadburga, whom I clasp with the golden links of spiritual love, and whom I embrace with the divine and virgin kiss of charity, Boniface, bishop, legate of the Roman Church, servant of the servants of God. . . . Know that for my sins' sake the course of my pilgrimage is through storms; suffering and sadness are everywhere around me; and the saddest of all is the snare laid by false brethren, which

before St Boniface. He corresponded with her as well as with the Abbess of Barking before his departure for Germany.

[1] "Beatissimæ virgini immo dilectissimæ dominæ Eadburge, monasticæ normulæ conversationis emeritæ."—*Ep.* 10.

[2] Epist. 87, ed. Jaffé; 27, ed. Serrarius. The latter concludes, from certain passages, that this letter must have been addressed to Eadburga, although it bears no name, and says simply: "Reverendissimæ ac dilectissimæ ancillæ Christi N."

[3] "Rogo ut non indignemini . . . quia cotidiana tribulatio divina solamina fratrum ac sororum me quærere admonet."—*Ep.* 87, ed. Jaffé.

is worse than the malice of the unbelievers. Pray, then, to the Lamb of God, the only defender of my life, to protect me amidst all these wolves. . . . Pray also for these heathens who have been intrusted to us by the Apostolic See, that God, who desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, may deign to wrest them from idolatry and add them to our mother the Catholic Church. May the eternal rewarder of every good action make thee to triumph for ever in the glorious company of angels, my beloved sister, who by sending a copy of the Holy Scriptures hast consoled the poor exile in Germany. The man who has to penetrate into the darkest corners of these nations, cannot but fall into the snares of death, if he has not the word of God to light his steps. Pray, pray always, that He who from the highest heaven looks upon all that is humblest here below, may pardon me my sins, and grant to me when I open my mouth the eloquence that is needed to make the Gospel of the glory of Christ run and shine like a flame among the heathen nations."[1]

He wrote with not less effusion and tenderness

[1] "Dilectissimæ sorori et jamdudum spiritalis clientelæ propinquitate connexæ. . . . Aureo spiritalis amoris vinculo amplectendæ et divino ac virgineo caritatis osculo stringendo sorori Eadburgæ abbatissæ. . . . Undique labor, undique mœror. . . . Carissimam sororem remunerator æternus . . . lætificet . . . quæ, sanctorum librorum munera transmittendo, exulem Germanicum . . . consolata est. . . . Qui tenebrosos angulos Germanicarum gentium lustrare debet."—*Epist.* 73, 75, ed. Jaffé. "Ut præstet mihi verbum in apertione oris mei" (*Ephes.* vi. 19); "ut currat et clarificetur inter gentes Evangelium gloriæ Christi" (2 *Thessal.* iii. 1).

to the Abbess Bugga,[1] who, overwhelmed with trials in the government of her double monastery, had sought comfort from him, and who was anxious to complete her life by a pilgrimage to Rome. "To my beloved lady, the sister whom I love in the love of Christ, more than all other women, the humble Boniface, unworthy bishop. . . . Ah, dearest sister, since the fear of God and the love of travel have put between us so many lands and seas, I have learned from many, what storms of trouble have assailed your old age. I am deeply grieved to hear it, and lament that, after having put aside the chief cares of the government of your monasteries, out of love for a life of contemplation, you should have met with crosses still more frequent and more painful. I write thus, venerable sister, full of compassion for your griefs, and full also of the recollections of your kindness and of our ancient friendship, to exhort and console you as a brother. . . . I would that you were always joyful and happy in that hope of which the Apostle speaks, which is born of trial and never deceives. I would that you should despise with all your strength these worldly

[1] This Bugga was also called Eadburga. Could she be, as has been often supposed, the *Heaburg cognomento Bugga* who figures in the title of Epistle 14 ed. Jaffé, 38 ed. Serrarius, 30 ed. Giles? Nothing, it appears to us, can be more doubtful, but we have neither time nor power to discuss a question in itself so unimportant. The Anglo-Saxon custom of having two names, which we have already met with in the cases of Domneva or Ermenberga, foundress of Minster, and Winefrid or Boniface, &c., adds to the difficulty and confusion, sometimes completely inextricable, of all researches into the history of the early Anglo-Saxon Church.

troubles as the soldiers of Christ of both sexes have always despised them. . . . In the spring-time of your youth, the father and lover of your chaste virginity called you to Him with the irresistible accent of fatherly love; and it is He who, now that you are old, would increase the beauty of your soul by so many labours and trials. Meet, then, dearest friend, the suffernigs of heart and body with the buckler of faith and patience, that you may complete in your beautiful old age the work commenced in the flower of your youth. At the same time, I entreat you, remember your ancient promise, and do not cease to pray the Lord that He may deliver my soul from all peril. . . . Farewell, and be sure that the faith which we have sworn to each other will never fail."[1]

As to the project of the pilgrimage to Rome, he will not pronounce either for or against it, but he begs her to wait the advice sent to her from Rome

[1] "O soror carissima, postquam nos timor Christi et amor peregrinationis longa et lata terrarum ac maris intercapedine separavit. . . . Nunc autem . . . beneficiorum tuorum et antiquarum amicitiarum memor." —*Epist.* 86, ed. Jaffé. "Quia omnes milites Christi utriusque sexus tempestates et tribulationes infirmitatesque hujus sæculi despexerunt. . . . Qui pater et amator castæ virginitatis tuæ, qui te primevo tempore juventutis tuæ. . . . Ut quod in bona juventute cœpisti, in senectute bella ad gloriam Dei perficias. . . . Dominæ dilectissimæ et in amore Christi omnibus cæteris feminini sexus præferendæ sorori. . . . Bonifacius exiguus. . . . Fidem antiquam inter nos nunquam deficere scias." *Epist.* 86, 88, ed. Jaffé.

This Abbess Bugga, who must not be confounded with the one quoted above, survived Boniface; she is mentioned as *honorabilis abbatissa* in a letter of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the successor of Boniface (*Ep.* 113, ed. Jaffé). She is probably the same who made a pilgrimage to Rome, and who will be spoken of further on.

by their common friend, an abbess named Wethburga, who had gone there to seek that peace of contemplative life for which Bugga sighed, but had found only storms, rebellions, and the threat of a Saracenic invasion.[1]

The Anglo-Saxon monks who had accompanied the future martyr in his apostolic mission, rivalled their chief in the warmth of their expressions in their letters to their cloistered sisters. Lullius, who was to replace Boniface in the archiepiscopal see of Mayence, wrote along with two of his companions to the Abbess Cuneburga, a daughter of one of the Anglo-Saxon dynasties, telling her that she occupied the first place above all other women in the innermost sanctuary of their hearts.[2] The same Lullius wrote to the Abbess Eadburga, who was so dear to his master, begging her not to refuse him the sweetness of receiving letters from her, and to assure her that the spiritual brotherhood which united them made him capable of doing anything to please her.[3] There still remains to be quoted a letter from an anonymous monk to a nun equally unknown, which has had the honour of being preserved through all these ages, along with the letters of St

[1] *Epist.* 88, ed. Jaffé.

[2] "Dominæ dilectissimæ Christique religiosissimæ abbatissæ, regalis prosapiæ generositate præditæ. . . . Agnoscere cupimus almitatis tuæ clementiam, quia te præ cæteris cunctis feminini sexus in cordis cubiculo cingimus amore."—*Epist.* 41, ed. Jaffé.

[3] "Et si quid mihi . . . imperare volueris, scit caritas illo quæ inter nos est copulata spiritali germanitate, id meam parvitatem totis nisibus implere velle. Interea rogo ut mihi litteras tuæ dulcedinis destinare non deneges."—*Epist.* 75, ed. Jaffé.

Boniface; a fact at which we rejoice, for it throws a pleasing light upon the tender and simple emotions which filled those honest, humble, and fervent hearts by whom Germany was won to the faith of Jesus Christ: — "N., unworthy of a truly close affection, to N., greeting and happiness in the Lord: Beloved sister, though the vast extent of the seas separate us a little, I am daily your neighbour in my memory. I entreat you not to forget the words that we have exchanged, and what we promised each other the day of my departure. I salute you, dearest; live long, live happy, praying for me. I write you these lines not to impose my wishes arrogantly upon you, but humbly to ask for yours, as if you were my own sister, did I possess one."[1]

Tender and confidential as was the tone of the letters which arrived from Germany in the Anglo-Saxon cloisters, there seems to be something still more warm and intimate in the fragments which

[1] "Intimæ dilectionis amore quamvis indignus. . . . Amantissima soror, licet longuscula alta marium æqualitate distam. . . . Sis memor, carissima, verborum nostrorum, quæ pariter pepigimus, quando profectus fueram. . . . Vale, vivens ævo longiore et vita feliciore, interpellans pro me. Hæc pauca ad te scripsi, non arroganter mea commendans, sed humiliter tua deposcens seu . . . propriæ germanæ nuper nanctæ. Vale." —*Epist.* 139, ed. Jaffé. This interesting production is unfortunately followed by an effusion in Latin verse much less admirable:—

"Vale, Christi virguncula, Christi nempe tiruncula,
Mihi cara magnopere atque gnara in opere," &c.

Cf. 96 and 97 of the same collection. Let us add that the same simple and tender familiarity between monks and nuns is found, five centuries after our Anglo-Saxons, in the interesting collection of letters from B. Jourdain de Saxe, second general of the Dominicans, to the nuns of St Agnes of Bologne and to the B. Diana, their foundress, recently published by Père Bayonne, Paris and Lyons, Bauchu, 1865.

remain to us of those which were written in the cells of Winbourne, Minster, and many other monasteries, and which were sent from thence whenever a sure messenger presented himself, along with presents of books, vestments, spices, sacred linen, &c., to the monks engaged beyond the sea in the great work of the Teutonic missions.

One continually apparent feature in them, which we have already remarked, is an eager and unconquerable desire to travel, to go to Rome, notwithstanding the numerous and formidable obstacles which stood in the way of the pilgrimage, and the dangers of every kind to which women were exposed in undertaking it—dangers which Boniface and his companions had energetically pointed out. The last trace which remains to us of the exemplary activity of the illustrious Elfleda, Abbess of Whitby, who died in 714, after sixty years of monastic life, is a letter of recommendation addressed to the daughter of the King of Austrasia, who was abbess of a monastery near Treves, in favour of an English nun, whom she calls her daughter, as she had educated her from her youth; she had detained her as long as she could for the good of souls, but at last had permitted her to satisfy her ardent desire of visiting the tombs of St Peter and St Paul.[1] One of the chief friends of St Boniface, the Abbess Bugga, who must not be confounded with her whom we have just mentioned, had not only the strength and privilege

The three Buggas and the two Eadburgas.

[1] *Epist.* 8, ed. Jaffé.

of accomplishing that journey, but also the happiness of meeting him at Rome, from whence she returned safe to resume the government of her community.[1]

A third Bugga, who is also called Eadburga, eagerly entertained the same desire, and expressed it in a long letter written to Boniface, jointly with her mother Eangytha, who was abbess of the monastery in which both lived. What was this monastery? Its situation is not ascertained, but it is probable that it was either Whitby or Hartlepool, or some other house situated on the rocks which overlook the Northern Sea: so entirely do the images employed both by the mother and daughter reveal a life accustomed to the emotions of a seashore. Both of them, while consulting him on their project, open their heart to him, and tell him of their trials; and through their abrupt and incoherent style and faulty Latin thus afford us a glimpse of the agitations and miseries which too often trouble the peace and light of the cloister. "Loving brother," they write, "brother in the spirit rather than in the flesh, and enriched by the gifts of the spirit, in these pages, which you see bathed by our tears, we come to confide to you alone, and with God alone for a witness, that we are overwhelmed by the troubles accumulated upon us, and by the tumult of secular affairs. When the foaming and

[1] See the curious and interesting letter of Ethelbert II., King of Kent, to Boniface, to which we shall return later (*Epist.* 103, ed. Jaffé; 73 ed. Giles.) It will there be seen that this Bugga was of the race of the Ascings: "Utpote consanguinitate propinquitatis nostræ admonita."

stormy waves of the sea break against the rocks on the shore, when the breath of the furious winds has roused the breadth of ocean, as the keel of the boats is seen in the air, and the masts under water, so the boat of our souls is driven about by a whirlwind of griefs and calamities. We are in the house which is spoken of in the Gospel: 'The rain descended, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house' (Matth. vii. 25, 27). What afflicts us above all is the recollection of our innumerable sins, and the absence of any really complete good work. And besides the care of our own souls, we must bear, which is harder still, that of all the souls of every age and of both sexes which have been confided to us, and of which we must render an account before the judgment-seat of Christ, not only of their actions, but also of their thoughts, which are known to God alone! To which must be added the daily toil of our domestic affairs, the discussion of all the quarrels which the enemy of every good takes pleasure in sowing among men in general, and especially among monks, and in monasteries. And besides, we are tormented by our poverty, by the small size of our cultivated lands, and more still by the enmity of the king, who listens to all the accusations made against us by the envious; by the taxes laid on us for the service of the king, his queen, the bishop, the earl, and their satellites and servants,—things which would take too much space to enumerate, and are

more easily imagined than described. To all these distresses must be added the loss of our friends and relations, who formed almost a tribe, and of whom none remain. We have neither son, brother, father, nor uncle: we have no more than an only daughter, deprived of everything she loved in the world except her mother, who is very old, and a son of her brother, who is also unfortunate, though without any fault of his, because the king hates our family. There remains, therefore, not one person in whom we can put our trust. God has taken all from us by different means. Some are dead in their country, and wait in their dark graves the day of the resurrection and the last judgment, the day when envy shall be overcome and consumed, and all mourning and pain shall disappear from the presence of the elect. Others have left their native shore to confide themselves to the plains of ocean, and to visit the tombs of the apostles and martyrs. For all these reasons, and for others which could not be told in a day, not even one of the long days of July or August, our life is a burden to us.

"Every being that is unhappy, and has lost confidence in himself, seeks a faithful friend to whom he can open his heart and pour forth all its secrets. Ah! how true is what they say, that nothing can be sweeter than to have some one to whom we can speak of everything as to ourselves! Now, we have sought for that faithful friend in whom we could have more confidence than in ourselves; who should

regard our pains and distresses as his own ; who should pity all our evils, and console them by his salutary counsels. Yes, we have sought him long. And at last we hope to have found in you this friend whom we have so long desired and eagerly hoped for.

"Oh that God would deign to carry us in the arms of His angel, as He did of old the prophet Habakkuk and the deacon Philip, into the far countries where you travel, and make us to hear the living word from your mouth, which would be sweeter to us than honey! But, since we do not deserve this, and that we are separated by land and sea, we will nevertheless use our confidence in you, brother Boniface, to tell you that for a long time we have desired, like so many of our kinsmen and friends, to visit that Rome which was once mistress of the world, to obtain the pardon of our sins. I above all, Eangytha, who am old, and consequently have more sins than others, I have this desire. I confided my plan formerly to Wala, who was then my abbess and spiritual mother, and to my daughter, who was then very young. But we know that there are many who disapprove our intention, because the canons enjoin that each should remain where she has made her vow, and give account of that vow to God. Troubled by this doubt, we pray you, both of us, to be our Aaron, and to present our prayers to God, that by your mediation He may show us what will be most useful for us, to remain

at home, or to go on this holy pilgrimage. We entreat you to answer what we have written to you in a style so rustic and unpolished. We have no trust in those who glorify themselves in the sight of man, but we have much trust in your faith and charity to God and your neighbours. . . . Farewell, spiritual brother, faithful, amiable, and beloved with a pure and sincere love. . . . A friend is long sought, rarely found, and still more rarely preserved. Farewell; pray that our sins may not bring us misfortune." [1]

The beginning of the friendship between Lioba and Boniface.

Let us now turn to the beautiful and learned Lioba (*die Liebe*, the beloved), and observe the means she took while still very young, from her convent at Winbourne, to make herself known to

[1] "Amantissime frater, spiritalis magis quam carnalis, et spiritalium gratiarum munificentia magnificatus, tibi soli indicare voluimus et Deus solus testis est nobis, quas cernis interlitas lacrymis. . . . Tanquam spumosi maris vortices verrunt et vellunt undarum cumulos, conlisos saxis, quando ventorum violentia et procellarum tempestates sævissime enormum euripum impellunt et cymbarum carinæ sursum immutate et malus navis deorsum duratur, haut secus animarum nostrarum naviculæ. . . . Quas seminat omnium bonorum invisor; qui . . . inter omnes homines spargit, maxime per monasticos et monachorum contubernia. . . . Angit præterea paupertas et penuria rerum temporalium et angustia cespitis ruris nostris; et infestatio regalis. . . . Et ut dicitur, quid dulcius est quam habeas illum cum quo omnia possis loqui ut tecum? . . . Diu quæsivimus. Et confidimus quia invenimus in te illum amicum, quem cupivimus, et optavimus et speravimus. . . . Vale, frater spiritalis fidelissime atque amantissime et sincera et pura dilectione dilecte; . . . Amicus diu quæritur, vix invenitur, difficile servatur."—*Epist.* 14, ed. Jaffé. We have already quoted a letter in which Boniface replies to an Abbess Bugga on the subject of a pilgrimage to Rome (*Epist.* 88, ed. Jaffé). I do not think that this reply belongs to the letter I am about to quote, because it says nothing of the mother Eangytha, and because it is filled with various subjects of which there is no question in the letter of the mother and daughter.

the great man who afterwards called her to his aid to introduce the light of the Gospel and monastic life among the German nations :—

"To the very reverend lord and bishop Boniface, beloved in Christ, his kinswoman Leobgytha,[1] the last of the servants of God, health and eternal salvation. I pray your clemency to deign to recollect the friendship which united you to my father Tinne, an inhabitant of Wessex, who departed from this world eight years ago, that you may pray for the repose of his soul. I also recommend to you my mother Ebba, your kinswoman, as you know better than me, who still lives in great suffering, and has been for long overwhelmed with her infirmities. I am their only daughter; and God grant, unworthy as I am, that I might have the honour of having you for my brother, for no man of our kindred inspires me with the same confidence as you do. I have taken care to send you this little present, not that I think it worthy your attention, but that you may remember my humbleness, and that, notwithstanding the distance of our dwellings, the tie of true love may unite us for the rest of our days. Excellent brother, what I ask you with earnestness is, that the buckler of your prayers may defend me from the poisoned arrows of the enemy. I beg of you also to excuse the

[1] She had also two names in Anglo-Saxon, Truthgeba and Leobgytha; but she received the surname of Lioba or Lieba, under which she is generally known, because, according to her biographer, she was beloved by every one.—ZELL, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

rusticity of this letter, and that your courtesy will not refuse the few words of answer which I so much desire. You will find below some lines which I have attempted to compose according to the rules of poetic art, not from self-confidence, but to exercise the mind which God has given me, and to ask your counsel. I have learned all that I know from Eadburga,[1] my mistress, who gives herself to profound study of the divine law. Farewell: live a long and happy life; intercede for me.

"May the Almighty Judge, who made the earth,
And glorious in His Father's kingdom reigns,
Preserve your chaste fire warm as at its birth,
Till time for you shall lose its rights and pains."[2]

Cena the Unworthy.

Beside the celebrated Lioba, let us quote an unknown nun, who calls herself Cena the Unworthy—*Pontifici Bonifacio Christi amatori Cene indigna*—but who writes to the great apostle with a proud and original simplicity which goes to my heart, and which I thank the ancient compilers for having preserved along with the letters of the great apostle. "I confess, my dearest," she says, "that, seeing you too seldom with the eyes of my body, I cease not to look at you with the eyes of my heart. . . . And this I declare, that to the

[1] This, then, is a third Eadburga, who was mistress of the novices at Winbourne, and must not be confounded either with Eadburga, Abbess of Thanet, or with Eadburga, surnamed Bugga, both of whom appear in St Boniface's correspondence.

[2] I reprint the translation from the excellent work of Ozanam, *La Civilisation Chrétienne chez les Francs*, p. 226, from which I shall have many other quotations to make if I am enabled to continue my work, and to relate the conquest of Germany by the Anglo-Saxon monks.

end of my life I shall always recollect you in my prayers. I entreat you, by our affection and our mutual faith, to be faithful to my littleness, as I shall be faithful to your greatness, and to help me by your prayers, that the Almighty may dispose of my life according to His will. If one of your people ever comes to this land, let him not disdain to have recourse to my poverty; and if I can render any service, either spiritual or temporal, to you or to others, I will do it with all my might to the great profit of my soul."[1]

This letter was addressed to Boniface, then a bishop, very probably by one of those whom he had transplanted from England into Germany.

Egburga the Desolate.

Let us now listen to another Anglo-Saxon maid, a contemporary of his youth, Egburga, whom some suppose to have been that daughter of an East Anglian king who was the abbess and friend of St Guthlac.[2] She wrote to Boniface while he was still abbot of an English monastery, to confide to him her private griefs—"To the holy abbot and true friend, Winifred, full of knowledge and religion, Egburga, the last of his pupils, eternal greeting in the Lord. Since I have known the blessing of your affection, it has remained in my soul like an odour of incomparable sweetness. And though I may be henceforward

718-722.

[1] "Jam fateor tibi, carissime . . . et hoc tibi notum facio, quod usque ad finem vitæ meæ te semper in meis orationibus recordor, et te rogo per creditam amicitiam ut meæ parvitati fidelis sis, sicut in te credo."—*Epist.* 94, ed. Jaffé.

[2] See p. 120 of this volume.

deprived of your temporal presence, I do not cease to embrace you as a sister. You were already my kind brother; you are now my father. Since death, bitter and cruel, has snatched from me my brother Oshere whom I loved more than anybody in the world, I prefer you to all other men. Neither night nor day passes that I do not recall your lessons. Believe me, for God is my witness, I love you with a supreme love. I am sure that you will never forget the friendship which united you to my brother. I am good for very little, and much inferior to him in worth and in knowledge; but I yield nothing to him in my affection for you. Time has passed since then; but the heavy cloud of sorrow has never left me. On the contrary, the longer I live the more I suffer. I have proved the truth of what is written, that the love of man brings grief, but the love of Christ lights the heart. My heart has received a new wound by the loss of my dearest sister Wethburga. She has suddenly disappeared from my side—she with whom I grew up, who has sucked the same milk, as I call Jesus to witness."

Here the poor nun, no doubt desiring to show to her ancient master that she was not unworthy of his lessons, proceeds to quote Virgil:—

"Crudelis ubique
Luctus, ubique pavor, et plurima mortis imago."[1]

But she quotes wrongly without perceiving it, as has been the case with two or three terrible sole-

[1] *Æneid*, ii. 369, 370.

cisms which occur in the preceding part of her letter.[1] After which she continues :—

"I should have wished to die had God permitted it. But it is not cruel death, it is a separation still more cruel which has withdrawn us from each other; she to happiness, as I believe, but I to misfortune, since she has left me as a sort of pledge to the service of the world, while she whom I love so much is now shut up, according to what I hear, in I know not what prison in Rome.[2] But the love of Christ which blossoms in her heart is stronger than all bonds. She will ascend the strait and narrow way, but I am left lying in the depths, enchained by the law of the flesh. In the day of judgment she will sing joyously with the Lord, 'I was in prison, and thou visitedst me.' You too, in that day, will sit where the twelve apostles sit, and will be proud, like a glorious chief, of having led before the tribunal of the eternal King so many

[1] "Ego autem licet scentia *tardiora* et meritis *viliora* illo sim, tamen erga tuæ caritatis obsequium dispar non sum." I shall perhaps be reproached for lingering over these minutiæ. Let it be so; all that relates to the history of the soul, especially in the cradle of the faith, attracts me irresistibly. What is more touching than these imperfections of style in a classic tongue from the pen of a half-civilised woman, who at all risks must express to the heart of a friend the emotions which fill her own?

[2] "Me vero infelicem, quasi quoddam depositum, huic sæculo servire permisit, sciens enim quantum illam dilexi, quantum amavi, quam nunc, ut audio, Romana carcer includit."—*Epist.* 13. The anonymous author of *Notes on St Hilda and St Bega* concludes from this passage that Egburga had succeeded her sister Wethburga as abbess, and that it is the latter who is alluded to in the letter to St Boniface as being already fixed at Rome. This conjecture appears probable enough. The two sisters, with an elder one, all three daughters of a king of East Anglia, would thus have been successively abbesses of Hackness. See genealogical table D.

souls won by your labours. But I in this valley of tears weep for my sins which have made me unworthy of such company.

"For this reason the seaman, beaten by the tempest, does not long to enter the port, nor do the parched fields thirst for rain, nor the mother wandering along the winding shore in the agonies of suspense await her son, with more anxiety than that I feel in my desire once more to enjoy your presence. My sins prevent it, and I am in despair. But, sinner as I am, prostrated at your feet, I implore you from the bottom of my heart—I cry to you from the ends of the earth—O blessed lord, that you will carry me to the height of the rock of your prayers, for you are my hope and my citadel against the enemy visible and invisible. To console my great grief, to calm the waves of my trouble, to give some support to my weakness, send me help, either in the form of holy relics or at least by words from your hand, however short, that I may always look at them as at yourself."[1]

[1] "Abbate (*sic*) sancto veroque amico . . . Wynfrido Egburg ultima discipulorum seu discipularum tuarum. . . . Caritatis tuæ copulam fateor; ast dum per interiorem hominem gustavi, quasi quiddam mellitæ suavitatis meis visceribus hic sapor insidet. Et licet interim . . . ab aspectu corporali visualiter defraudata sim, sororis tamen semper amplexibus collum tuum constrinxero. . . . Crede mihi, Deo teste, quia summo te complector amore. . . . Sed . . . ut scriptum est: *Amor hominis deducit dolorem, amor autem Christi illuminat cor.* . . . Non sic tempestate jactatus nauta portum desiderat, non sic sitientia imbres arva desiderant, non sic curvo litore anxia filium mater expectat, quam ut ego visibus vestris fruere cupio. . . . Vel paucula saltim per scripta beatitudinis tuæ verba, ut in illis tuam præsentiam semper habeam."—*Epist.* 13.

Thus we see how warm still were the natural affections in these impetuous hearts, without wronging the new bonds of friendship and fraternity which religious life, with its active and extended connections in the spiritual order, developed in them. The invaluable collection of the Epistles of St Boniface enclose several letters from Anglo-Saxon nuns to their brothers, always in Latin, and in very unclassical Latin, but all bearing the marks of tender and sincere affection. "To my only and beloved brother," writes one of these, who describes herself as the least of the servants of Christ. "How, dearest brother, can you make me wait for your coming so long? Do you never think that I am alone in the world? that no other brother, no other relation, comes to see me? You do this, perhaps, because I have not been able to do all I wished for your service; but how can you so forget the rights of charity and kindred? Oh, my brother, my dear brother, why do you thus by your absence fill with sadness my days and nights? Do you not know that no other living soul is more dear to me than you are? I cannot say in writing all that I would; and, besides, I feel that you have ceased to care for your poor little sister."[1]

The name of the writer of these words is un-

[1] "Fratri unico atque amantissimo . . . N. H., ultima ancillarum Dei. . . . Quare non vis cogitare quod ego sola in hac terra? . . . O frater, o frater mi, cur potes mentem parvitatis meæ assidue mœrore, fletu atque tristitia die noctuque caritatis tuæ absentia affligere? . . . Jam certum teneo, quod tibi cura non est de mea parvitate."—*Epist.* 144, ed. Jaffé.

Lament of a nun over her brother's absence.

known; and the name, but nothing more, is known of another nun whose only brother was among the companions of Boniface. She would not be comforted for his absence, and poured out her sadness in writing to her brother with a poetic and pathetic voice which recalls the wail of St Radegund, two centuries earlier, in her convent at Poitiers, when thinking of the troubles of her youth.[1] Our Anglo-Saxon nun also attempted to interpret in Latin verse the sorrows of her heart. But her verses are far from having the merit of those which Fortunatus placed at the service of the abbess-queen of St Croix. Her prose is at once more correct and more touching. "To Balthard, my only brother, loved in the Lord, and more loved than any one in the world. . . . I have received with tender gratitude the message and gifts which you have sent me by your faithful messenger Aldred. I will do, with the help of God, everything you tell me, but on the condition that you will come back and see me. I cannot exhaust the

[1] See vol. ii. p. 301. M. Zell believes this Bertgytha to be the same as the nun of that name who accompanied Lioba to Germany, and that it is from thence she writes to her brother; but this supposition is irreconcilable with the text of the letters, where it is said that the sister had been abandoned very young by her parents, while the only historian who speaks of the companions of Lioba says that Berchtgyd went to Germany with her mother, and that both became abbesses in Thuringia.—OTHLO, *Vita S. Bonifacii*, ed. Jaffé, p. 490. The messenger who bore the correspondence between the brother and sister was Aldred or Aldraed, who carried from Germany to England the messages of the deacon Lullius, the chief assistant of Boniface (*Epist.* 78), from which it has been supposed that the brother of Berchtgyd might have been employed on the same mission.

fountain of my tears when I see or hear that others meet their friends again. Then I recall that I was forsaken in my youth by my parents, and left alone here. Nevertheless I have not been forsaken by God, and I bless His almighty mercy that He has preserved your life as well as mine. And now, dearest brother, I implore and beseech you, deliver my soul from this sadness, which is very hurtful to me. I declare to you that even if you only stayed with me one day and left me the next, grief would vanish from my heart. But if it is disagreeable to you to grant my request, I take God to witness that never at least shall our tenderness be betrayed by me. Perhaps you would prefer that I should go to you instead of awaiting you here. For myself, I should willingly go where the bodies of our parents rest, to end my life, and to rise from that spot to the country of those beings whose peace and joy are eternal. . . . Farewell, dear servant of the cross, beloved of your sister; keep your good fame for ever."

On other occasions she writes again: "My soul is weary of life, because of my love for you. I am here alone, forsaken, deprived of all kindred. My father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord hath taken me up. Between you and me there is that gulf of great waters of which Scripture speaks; but we are united by love, for true love is never overcome, neither by space nor time. At the same time I acknowledge that I am always

sad. My soul is troubled even in sleep, for love is strong as death. Now I beseech you, my beloved brother, come to me, or let me go to you, that I may see you again before I die, for the love of you will never leave my heart. My brother, your only sister greets you in Christ. I pray for you as for myself, day and night—every hour and every minute. . . . I pray weeping and stretched on the earth, that you may live happy here below, and that you may become a saint."[1]

I pity those who, either from sceptical contempt for all religious tradition, or modern rigorism, can listen with indifference or contempt to the cries of love and grief which sprang more than a thousand years ago from the depth of those Anglo-Saxon cloisters, and which attest, before and after so many other witnesses, the immortal vitality of the affections and wants of the human heart, in all climates and all forms of society. What can be more touching than these outbursts of human tenderness amid the rude kindred of the Anglo-Saxons, and

[1] "Dilectissimo fratri in Domino et in carne carissimo Balthardo Berthgyth. . . . Et nunc, frater mi, adjuro te atque deprecor, ut auferas tristitiam ab anima mea: quia valde nocet mihi. . . . Sin autem displicet tibi implere petitionem meam, tunc Deum testem invoco, quod in me nunquam fit derelicta dilectio nostra. . . .

"Have, crucicola care, salutate a sorore;
Fine tenus feliciter famam serva simpliciter. . . .

"Tædet animam meam vitæ meæ propter amorem fraternitatis nostræ. . . . Multæ sunt aquarum congregationes inter me et te. . . . Tamen caritate jungamur; quia vera caritas nunquam locorum limite frangitur. . . . Neque per somnium mente quiesco.

"Vale vivens feliciter ut sis sanctus simpliciter. . . . Precibus peto profusis fletibus; solo tenus sæpissima."—*Epist.* 148, 149, ed. Jaffé.

under the rugged bark of their wild nature? What more interesting than the effort of these souls to interpret, in a language which they supposed more cultivated than their own, the emotions which moved them, and, above all, to renew themselves continually in the truths and precepts of the Christian faith, which had for so short a time taken the place of the worship of their fathers among them! For my own part, I listen, across past centuries, to these yearnings of the heart, to these voices of the soul, with interest a thousand times greater than to the victories and conquests which have absorbed the attention of historians; and I offer up my heartfelt thanksgivings to the biographers of the saints and the editors of their works for having infolded in their volumes, like flowers in an herbal, these early traces of human love and the storms that assail it.

"It would be singular," says the austere and tender Lacordaire, "if Christianity, founded on the love of God and men, should end in withering up the soul in respect to everything which was not God. . . . Self-denial, far from diminishing love, nourishes and increases it. The ruin of love is self-love, not the love of God; and no one ever met on earth with affections stronger and purer, more ardent, more tender, and more lasting, than those to which the saints gave up their hearts, at once emptied of themselves and filled with God." [1]

[1] LACORDAIRE, *Lettres à des Jeunes Gens*. Toulouse, Nov. 9, 1852.

## VI.

But the storms of the heart, like the storms of life, have an end which is death—that death which delivers from everything—which crowns and sometimes explains everything. How did our Anglo-Saxon nuns die? As far as we can make out, they died happy and even joyous, without contradicting or giving up the tender affections which had agitated their hearts and animated their life. It would be a mistake to suppose that they only, or that even they the first, among the monastic classes of old, kept up those beautiful and holy friendships to their last days. St Gregory the Great has preserved to us the recollection of the noble Roman, Galla, daughter of the patrician Symmachus, who became a nun in a monastery near the Basilica of St Peter, and being attacked by a fatal illness had a vision three days before her death. The prince of the apostles appeared to her in a dream and announced to her that her sins were pardoned. She would not content herself with that supreme grace, but ventured to ask from her holy protector that another nun, sister Benedicta, whom she loved most in the community, might die with her. The apostle answered that her friend should not die at the same time, but should follow her in thirty days. The next morning Galla told the superior what she had seen and heard, and everything happened

Death does not end the friendship of the cloister.

St Galla.

as she said. The two friends at the end of a month were united by death.[1]

Hilda and her friend.

The great Abbess Hilda, of whom we have spoken so much, and who was for thirty years the light and oracle of Northumberland, had also in her community a favourite nun, or one, at least, who loved her, says Bede, with a great love. This nun had not the happiness of dying at the same time as her friend. But when the holy abbess, who had been consumed for seven years by a cruel fever, which did not for a single day interrupt the exercise of her spiritual maternity, came at last to the end of her trials—when she had given up her last breath in the midst of her daughters collected round her bed to hear the last exhortation, in which she besought them to keep the peace of the Gospel between them and all men,—her friend, who was at that moment detained in the novitiate, in a distant corner of the monastic lands, had the consolation of seeing in a dream the soul of Hilda led to heaven by a shining train of angels.[1]

[1] "Gothorum temporibus, hujus urbis nobilissima puella. . . . Ex amore sumens audaciam . . . quia quamdam sanctimonialem feminam in eodem monasterio præ cæteris diligebat . . . subjunxit: Rogo ut soror Benedicta mecum veniat. Cui ille respondit: Non, sed illa talis veniat tecum: hæc vero, quam petis, die erit trigesimo secutura."—S. Gregor., *Dial.*, l. IV., ap. *Brev. Roman. Off. Propr. Cler. Rom.* die 5 Oct.

[2] "In quo toto tempore nunquam . . . commissum sibi gregem et publice et privatim docere prætermittebat. . . . Septimo infirmitatis anno . . . circa galli cantum, percepto viatico sacrosanctæ communionis, cum accersitis ancillis Christi . . . de servanda eas invicem, immo cum omnibus pace evangelica admoneret: inter verba exhortationis læta mortem vidit. . . . Nunciavit matrem illarum omnium Hild abba-

Ethelburga and her friend.

*Læta mortem vidit:* she saw death with joy. These words, spoken by Bede of St Hilda, seem to have been applicable to all the female saints, and even to all the nuns, whose recollection he has preserved to us. There was one at Barking, who, after having been for long the humble and zealous assistant of the first abbess, Ethelburga, was warned of the death of that abbess, her friend, by a vision, in which she saw her dear Ethelburga wrapt in a shroud which shone like the sun, and raised to heaven by golden chains which represented her good works. Deprived of her spiritual mother, she lived for nine years in the most cruel sufferings, in order, says Bede, that the furnace of this daily tribulation might consume all the imperfection that remained among so many virtues. At last paralysis assailed all her members, and even her tongue. Three days before her death she recovered sight and speech: she was heard to exchange some words with an invisible visitor. It was her dearest Ethelburga, who came to announce to her her deliverance. "I can scarcely bear this joy," said the sick woman; and the following night, freed at once from sickness and from the bondage of the flesh, she entered into everlasting joy.[1]

tissam . . . se aspectante cum luce immensa ducibus angelis ad æternæ lumina lucis . . . ascendisse. . . . Ferunt quod eadem nocte . . . cuidam virginum Deo devotarum quæ illam immenso amore diligebat, obitus illius in visione apparuerit."—BEDE, iv. 23.

[1] "Christi famula Torchtgyd . . . adjutrix disciplinæ regularis eidem

A monument which is called the Maidens' Tomb is still shown in the fine church of Beverley; it is the grave of two daughters of an earl, a benefactor of the great Abbey of St John, who had taken the veil there. On Christmas night, according to the legend, they were the last to leave the midnight mass, and did not reappear in their stalls. After the service of the following night, the abbess, made anxious by their absence, went to look for them, and found them asleep in each other's arms. When they woke it was found that they supposed themselves to have slept only an hour, and had dreamt of paradise. They went down to the choir, and there, kneeling before the abbess, after having asked and received her benediction, died, still embracing each other.[1]

The daughters of the Earl at Beverley.

One of the most celebrated heathens of our century, Goethe, died asking for light. "More light!" these were, it is said, his last words. They recur

Deathbeds full of light.

matri, minores docendo vel castigando curabat. . . . Vidit quasi corpus hominis, quod esset sole clarius, sindone involutum in sublime ferri . . . quasi funibus auro clarioribus. . . . Per annos novem pia Redemptoris nostri provisione fatigata, ut quicquid in ea vitii sordidantis inter virtutes per ignorantiam vel incuriam resedisset, totum hoc cominus diutine tribulationis excoqueret. . . . *Nequaquam hæc læta ferre queo.* . . . Interrogata cum quo loqueretur: *Cum carissima*, inquit, *matre mea Ædilberge.* . . . Soluta carnis simul et infirmitatis vinculis, ad æternæ gaudia salutis intravit."—BEDE, iv. 9.

[1] Earl Puch, the father of these two sisters, is mentioned by Bede (v. 4), who describes the miraculous cure of his wife by St John of Beverley. One of their daughters was named Yolfrida; the narrative states that she became a nun at Beverley, and died there in 742. "Puch dedit cum filia manerium de Walkington." Puch held the manor of South Burton, two miles from Beverley. — DUGDALE, *Monasticon*, i. 170; MABILLON, *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, vol. iii. p. 413.

to the mind involuntarily, when we read of the happy and joyful death of these virgins, sweet and full of light, who prepared, in the depths of their cloisters now despised or forgotten, the conversion of the country of Goethe. Light above all, a heavenly and supernatural light, floods over their deathbeds and their tombs.

These visions full of light, and these happy deaths, seem to have been specially accorded to our Anglo-Saxons, and not only to those who died upon their native soil, but also to those who had passed their lives in foreign cloisters. At Faremoutier, in France, the daughter of a king of Kent, Earcongotha, of whom we have already spoken,[1] had edified all the inhabitants by the miracles of her virtue. Being warned of her approaching end, she went from cell to cell in the infirmary of the monastery asking for the prayers of the sick nuns. She died during the following night at the first glimpse of dawn. At the same hour the monks who occupied another part of the double monastery heard a sound like the noise of a multitude, who to the sound of heavenly music invaded the monastery. When they went out to see what it was, they found themselves in a flood of miraculous light, in the midst of which the soul of the foreign princess ascended to heaven.[2]

The daughter of the King of Kent at Faremoutier.

[1] See above, p. 244 and 256.

[2] "Magnarum fuit virgo virtutum . . . Hujus multa ab incolis loci illius solent opera virtutum et signa miraculorum usque hodie narrari. . . . Cœpit circuire in monasterio casulas infirmarum Christi famularum. . . .

And the lay-sister Willesinda.

In the same cloister at Faremoutier, where the daughter of the kings of Kent, the grandchild of Clovis and Ethelbert, thus lived and died, a humble lay-sister, also an Anglo-Saxon, had, like her royal companion, a joyous presentiment of her death, and a shining train of angels to escort her to heaven. One day when Willesinda (as she was called) worked in the garden of the monastery with the other lay-sisters, she said to them, "One of those who cultivate this spot is about to die; let us then be ready, that our tardiness may not injure us in eternity." They asked her in vain which one of them it should be. Soon after, she fell ill, and during all her sickness she looked up to heaven with eyes shining with happiness, repeating long passages from holy Scripture, though she had never learned them by heart. Like the cowherd-poet whom the Abbess Hilda brought into monastic life and to a knowledge of the Bible, she astonished all present by repeating to them the Old and New Testament in their order.

After this she began to sing with wonderful sweetness the services as she had heard them sung by the priests. Then all at once she said to her amazed companions, "Room, room, for those who

Ipsa autem nocte . . . incipiente aurora . . . multi de fratribus . . . sonitum quasi plurimæ multitudinis monasterium ingredientis; mox egressi dignoscere quid esset, viderunt lucem cœlitus emissam fuisse permaximam, quæ sanctam illam animam . . . ad æterna gaudia ducebat. . . . Tantæ fragrantia suavitatis ab imis ebullivit, ut cunctis qui adstabant fratribus ac sororibus, quasi opobalsami cellaria esse viderentur aperta."—BEDE, iii. 8.

are coming!" No one was seen to enter, but conversation was heard, which the sick woman kept up, bowing her head with an expression of respect and joy. "Welcome, my dear ladies, welcome," she said. "To whom are you speaking?" they asked her. "What!" she answered, "do you not recognise your sisters who have left this community for heaven? Look, Anstrude, there is Ansilda, your own sister, who has been long dead. She is clothed with the white robe of the elect." After this she breathed her last, and the choir of angels was immediately heard coming forth to meet the saved soul.[1]

Vision of the shining shroud at Barking.

But it was especially among the learned ladies of Barking, in the monastery which had made so warm a response to the classical teachings of Aldhelm and Boniface, that death was sweet and radiant. During the great pestilence of 664, which so cruelly desolated the new-born Church of England, the nuns went out one night from their church, at the

[1] "Quædam ex genere Saxonum Willesinda nomine, . . . quadam die dum in hortum intra monasterii septa laboraret, cum sodalibus locuta est: Cito a nobis quæ in hac area excolimus una itura est. . . . Cœpit læta ad cœlum vultus referre, et ignotas sibi dudum scripturarum paginas enarrare, exorsaque a principio libros Moysis per ordinem recitare, Evangeliique vitalia sacramenta ac Apostolica post veterum documenta narrare. Omnesque deinceps scripturas ex ordine memorare. . . . Hilari vultu, capiteque inclinato dixit: Benedicite dominæ meæ, benedicite dominæ meæ. Inquirentesque quæ adstabant quibus salutem præmitteret, respondit: Non cernitis sorores vestras quæ de vestro collegio migraverunt ad cœlos? Quærentesque illæ si agnosceret, increpanti voce ad unam earum Ansitrudem nomine loquitur: Vel tu, inquit, non agnoscis sororem tuam Ansildem, quæ dudum ad cœlos migravit candidatarum choris insertam."—*Vita S. Burgundofaræ*, c. vii., ap. MABILLON, *Act. SS. O. S. B.*, vol. ii. p. 425.

end of matins, to pray at the grave of the monks who had preceded them into the other world, when all at once they saw the entire sky lighted up and cover them all as with a radiant shroud. They were so terrified that the hymn they were singing died on their lips. This light, which was more brilliant than that of the sun, guided them to the burying-place in which they were themselves to rest, and then disappeared; and they understood that it showed them at once the heaven which awaited their souls, and the spot of earth in which their bodies were to await the day of resurrection.[1]

The virgin called by the child.

Among those who died in so great a number during this fatal year, there are two whose humble memory the Anglo-Saxon historian has not scorned to mingle with his narrative of the political and military events of Essex and East Anglia. One of them was still in perfect health, when she was told that a little child, who had been received and taken care of by the sisters, had just died, and with its last breath had called her thrice, "Edith! Edith! Edith!" Immediately she lay down on her bed, and died the same day, to follow her innocent forerunner to heaven.[2]

[1] "Egressæ de oratorio famulæ Christi . . . ecce subito lux emissa cœlitus, veluti linteum magnum . . . tanto eas stupore perculit, ut etiam canticum quod canebant tremefactæ intermitterent. Ipse splendor emissæ lucis, in cujus comparatione sol meridianus videri possit obscurus. . . . Ut nulli esset dubium, quin ipsa lux quæ animas famularum Christi esset ductura vel susceptura in cœlis, etiam corporibus earum," &c.—BEDE, iv. 7.

[2] "Puer trium circiter annorum . . . qui propter infantilem adhuc

The extinguished lamp.

Another, who was very young, but had been long ill, and was now in extremity, commanded those who watched her to carry away the lamp. "Put it out—put it out," she said, without ceasing, though she was not obeyed. "You suppose me mad, but I am not mad, and I tell you that I see this house full of such a light that your lamp troubles me with its obscure glimmer." Afterwards, when nobody would listen to her, she resumed: "Light your lamps then, and keep them as long as you please. But as for me, I have no need of your light; mine is elsewhere, and at dawn it will come for me." At dawn she was dead.[1]

## VII.

History has retained but these few names, and it is not without difficulty that even these can be gleaned from chronicles and legends. The veil of forgetfulness and indifference has fallen between us and the distant centuries. That

ætatem in virginum Deo dedicatarum solebat cella nutriri ibique medicari. . . . Clamavit . . . proprio eam nomine quasi præsentem alloquens, Eadgyd, Eadgyd, Eadgyd. . . . Ipso quo vocata est die . . . illum qui se vocavit ad regnum cœleste secuta est."—BEDE, iv. 8.

[1] "Cœpit subito circa mediam noctem clamare petens ut lucernam . . . extinguerent; quod cum frequenti voce repeteret. . . . Scio quod me hæc insana mente loqui arbitramini. . . . Vere dico vobis quod domum hanc tanta luce impletam esse perspicio, ut vestra illa lucerna mihi omnimodis esse videatur obscura. . . . Accendite ergo lucernam illam quamdiu vultis; attamen scitote quia non est mea; nam mea lux, incipiente aurora, mihi adventura est."—*Ibid.*

great fire, lighted by faith and charity in the souls of so many new and fervent Christians, is now extinguished; a few feeble rays scarcely reach us through the night of ages. That great garden of fragrant flowers, of blessed and glorious fruit, is now seen and enjoyed only by God; scarcely does a passing breath waft to us the faint lingerings of its perfume. Myriads of souls, candid and worthy, simple and delicate, sweet and fervent, which must have peopled these immense and numberless monasteries of old, will never be known to us! How many young and touching lives are thus buried in the darkness of forgetfulness, until the day when before the assembled universe they shall shine with the brightness of everlasting glory!

But in those distant ages they formed, for the honour and consolation of their country and the Church, a great army, numerous, hardy, and dauntless, bearing the glorious ensigns of sacrifice with magnanimous serenity and humble fervour. They confessed victoriously before the new-born Christianity and the beaten-back barbarism of their age, as their sisters in the present time confess, in the face of our over-proud civilisation, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the atonements of suffering, and the immortal empire of the soul over inferior nature.

In all these noble maids, betrothed to God, there appears a sort of courage and strength which is

Vigorous character of the most part of the Saxon nuns.

above their sex. It is the special attribute of monastic life to transfigure human nature, by giving to the soul that which is almost always wanting to it in ordinary existence. It inspires the young virgin with an element of manfulness which withdraws her from the weaknesses of nature, and makes her at the necessary moment a heroine; but a soft and tender heroine, rising from the depths of humility, obedience, and love, to reach the height of the most generous flights, and to attain everything that is most powerful and light-giving in human courage. It fills the heart of the true monk and true priest with treasures of intelligent compassion, of unlimited tenderness, of gentleness unmixed with laxness, and of an unremitting patience such as the heart of woman alone seems capable of containing. And sometimes to both, to the bride of God and to His minister, to the heroine of charity and to the master of doctrine and preaching, it adds by a supernatural gift the incomparable charm of childhood, with its artless and endearing candour; then may be seen upon a living countenance that simplicity in beauty, and that serenity in strength, which are the most lovely array of genius and virtue. Thus it happens by times that all that is most grand and pure in the three different types of humanity, the man, the woman, and the child, is found combined in one single being, which accomplishes all that a soul can do here below to rise from its fall, and to

render itself worthy of the God who has created and saved it.[1]

I speak in the present tense, for all this exists still, and is found and repeated every day in the bosom of our modern civilisation.

All the ancient world has perished except the army of sacrifice.

Every trace of the ancient world of which we have been endeavouring to seize an impression, has disappeared—everything has perished or changed, except the army of sacrifice. The vast and magnificent edifice of the ancient Catholic world has crumbled hopelessly to pieces. There will rise, and already, indeed, there does rise, a new world, which, like the ancient, will have its own greatness and its own littleness. But that of which we have just told the history has lasted, still lasts, and will endure for ever.

Twelve centuries after the Anglo-Saxon maids whose devotion we have related, the same hand falls upon our homes, upon our desolate hearts, and tears away from us our daughters and sisters. Never since Christianity existed have such sacrifices been more numerous, more magnanimous, more spontaneous, than now. Every day since the commencement of this century, hundreds of beloved creatures have come forth from castles and cottages, from palaces and workshops, to offer unto God their heart, their soul, their virgin innocence, their love

[1] AUBREY DE VERE, *Thoughts on St Gertrude.* Cf. T. W. ALLIES, *The Formation of Christendom*, 1865, Part I., Lect. 6, *Creation of Virginal Life.*

and their life. Every day among ourselves, maidens of high descent and high heart, and others with a soul higher than their fortune, have vowed themselves, in the morning of life, to an immortal husband.

They are the flower of the human race—a flower still sweet with the morning dew, which has reflected nothing but the rays of the rising sun, and which no earthly dust has tarnished — an exquisite blossom which, scented from far, fascinates with its pure fragrance, at least for a time, even the most vulgar souls. They are the flower, but they are also the fruit; the purest sap, the most generous blood of the stock of Adam; for daily these heroines win the most wonderful of victories, by the manliest effort which can raise a human creature above all earthly instincts and mortal ties.

Have you seen in March or April a child breathing in the first fresh breath of nature, the first gleam of admiration lightening in his bright eyes as they meet the gleam of awakening life in the woods and fields? There does the spring-time of life meet with the spring-time of nature, and to witness this meeting is a delight and a charm. But still more enchanting and more enrapturing by far, a rapture by which the soul is borne away to the utmost height of human emotion, is the sight of a virgin creature already budding into womanhood, radiant with youth and beauty, who turns away from all the

fragrance of life to breathe only the breath, and look only towards the glories, of heaven.

What a scene is this! and where can one be found which manifests more clearly the divine nature of the Church, or which throws more entirely into the shade the miseries and stains with which its heavenly splendour is sometimes veiled?

Number and persevering character of vocations in the present time.

But, let us again repeat, this sight is afforded to us everywhere, not only in our old and unhealthy Europe, but in that America[1] which all generous spirits regard with hope and confidence. Wherever the Gospel is preached, wherever a crucifix is raised, everywhere does Christ, with His irresistible arm, pluck and uproot these earthly flowers to transplant them nearer to heaven.

Spoilers and oppressors may in vain resume their persecutions, which are daily predicted and provoked by the writers of revolutionary Cæsarism. Devoted and outlawed chastity will resume its task. In the garrets or cellars of the palaces inhabited by the triumphant masters of the future, over their heads or under their feet, virgins will

[1] "We are penetrated with the most profound respect for those holy virgins who fill our religious communities. We fulfil one of the pleasantest of duties in giving public witness to the virtue and heroism of those Christian maidens, whose lives exhale the sacred odour of Jesus Christ, and who, by their devotion and their spirit of sacrifice, have contributed more perhaps than any other cause to produce a happy change in the minds of those estranged from our faith."—*Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops and Bishops of the United States, assembled in full Council at Baltimore*, Oct. 21, 1866.

be found who shall swear to Jesus Christ to belong only to Him, and who will keep their vow, if necessary, at the cost of their life.

In this age of laxity and universal languidness, these gentle victors have kept the secret of strength, and in the weakness of their sex, let it once again be repeated, they exhibit the masculine and persevering energy which is wanting in us, to attack in front and to subdue the egotism, cowardice, and sensuality of our time and of all times. They accomplish this task with a chaste and triumphant hardihood. All that is noble and pure in human nature is led to the fight against all our baseness, and to the help of all our miseries. Speak not of the charms of a contemplative life, of the peaceful joys of meditation and solitude. These are but the lot of few. Nowadays the great self-devoted crowd throws itself into quite another path. They rush forth to the rescue of the most repulsive and tedious infirmities of poor human nature, lavishing upon them unwearied cares; they swarm wherever they are wanted to cultivate the deserts of ignorance and of childish stupidity, often so intractable and restive. Braving all disgusts, all repugnance, all denunciations and ingratitudes, they come by thousands, with dauntless courage and patience, to win, caress, and soothe every form of suffering and of poverty.

And, along with their strength, they have light, prudence, and true insight. They understand life

without having experienced it. Who has taught them all these sad secrets? Who has taught these beings, at once so pure and so impassioned, at an age when the heart begins to be consumed by an insatiable thirst for human sympathy and human love, that such a thirst will never be satisfied in this world? Who has revealed to them the disgraceful frailty of earthly affections, even of the noblest and sweetest, the fondest and most deeply rooted, even of those which believed themselves everlasting, and held the greatest place in the hearts out of which they have miserably perished? Nothing but a divine instinct which frees them by withdrawing them from us. They are delivered from that withering amazement of the soul which meets disappointment, betrayal, and scorn, instead of love, and sometimes, after so many struggles and so many delusions, the silence of death in the fulness of life. They have forestalled their enemy, unmasked, baffled, and discomfited him. They have escaped for ever: "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the net of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped."

Thus they go bearing off to God, in the bloom of youth, their hearts, full of those treasures of deep love and complete self-renunciation which they refuse to man. They bury and consume their whole life in the hidden depths of voluntary renunciation, of unknown immolations.

When this is done, they assure us that they have

found peace and joy, and in the sacrifice of themselves the perfection of love. They have kept their hearts for Him who never changes and never deceives; and in His service they find consolations which are worth all the price they have paid for them—joys which are not certainly unclouded, for then they would be without merit, but whose savour and fragrance will last to the grave.

It is not that they would forget or betray us whom they have loved, and who love them. No; the arrow which has pierced our hearts and remains there has first struck through theirs. They share with us the weight and bitterness of the sacrifice. Isolation from the world is not insensibility. It is only a false spirituality which makes the soul hard, arrogant, and pitiless. When religion dries up or hardens the heart it is but a lying tyranny. Here, in true sacrifice, in supreme self-mortification, human affection loses none of its rights. They are all respected but all purified, all transformed into an offering to God, who has promised to comfort us more than a mother—"So shalt thou be son of the Most High, and He shall love thee more than thy mother doeth." The warmth of tenderness, afflicted yet so pure, so straightforward, and so sure of itself, glows forth in every word, in every look. The blessedness of belonging to God will never close a noble heart to the griefs of others, or deprive it of any generous emotion. That heart becomes, on the contrary, more tender and

more closely entwined to those it loves in proportion as it is entwined into a closer bond with the heart of Jesus.[1]

Is this a dream?—the page of a romance? Is it only history—the history of a past for ever ended? No; once more, it is what we behold and what happens amongst us every day.

This daily spectacle we who speak have seen and undergone. What we had perceived only across past centuries and through old books, suddenly rose one day before our eyes, full of the tears of paternal anguish. Who will not pardon us for having, under the spell of that everlasting recollection, lengthened, perhaps unreasonably, this page of a long uncompleted work? How many others have also, like ourselves, gone through this anguish, and beheld with feelings unspeakable the last worldly apparition of a beloved sister or child?

One morning she rises, she comes to her father and mother—"Farewell! all is over," she says; "I

[1] "However firm might be the resolution of Theresa to leave her father, the tender affection she bore him rendered the separation heartbreaking to her. 'I believe,' she says, 'that at the point of death I could not suffer more than I did then. It seemed as if my very bones were dislocated, because my love of God was not strong enough to triumph wholly over the natural tenderness I had for my parents. I was obliged to do myself extreme violence in leaving them, and if the Lord had not helped me, my good resolutions would never have enabled me to follow out my plans to the end; but His goodness gave me courage against myself. At the moment when I took the habit, God made me conscious how He blesses those who deny themselves for His sake. This internal struggle was known to Him only; on the surface nothing appeared in my conduct but courage and firmness.'"—*Histoire de sa Vie*, c. iii. ap. LE BOUCHER.

am going to die—to die to you and to all. I shall never be either a wife or a mother; I am no more even your child—I am God's alone." Nothing can withhold her. "They immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him."[1] Lo! she comes already arrayed for the sacrifice, brilliant and lovely, with an angelic smile, fervent and serene, blooming and beaming, the crowning work of creation! Proud of her last beautiful attire, bright and brave, she ascends to the altar, or rather she rushes—she flies like a soldier to the breach, and, hardly able to keep down the impassioned ardour which consumes her, she bows her head under the veil which is to be a yoke upon her for the rest of her life, but which will also be her eternal crown.

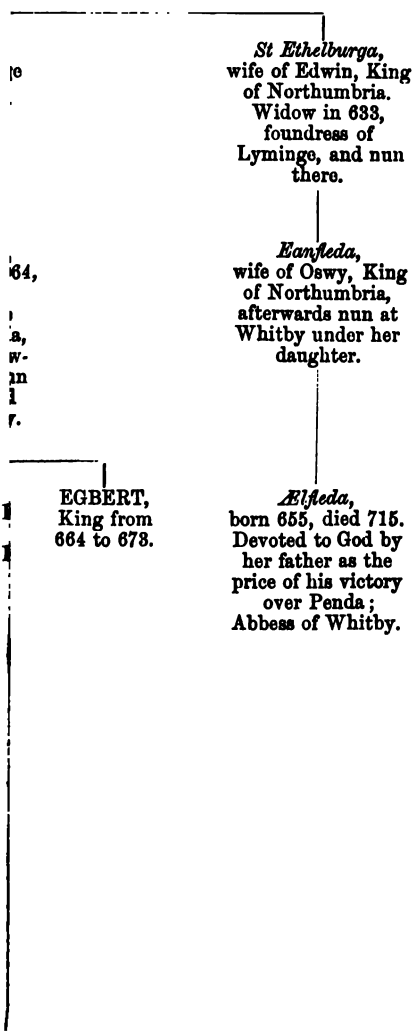
It is done. She has crossed the gulf with that impetuous bound, that soaring impulse, that magnanimous self-forgetfulness, which is the glory of youth, with that pure and unconquerable enthusiasm which nothing here below will ever equal or extinguish.

Who then is this invisible Lover, dead upon a cross eighteen hundred years ago, who thus attracts to Him youth, beauty, and love? who appears to their souls clothed with a glory and a charm which they cannot withstand? who darts upon them at a stroke and carries them captive? who seizes on the living flesh of our flesh, and drains the purest

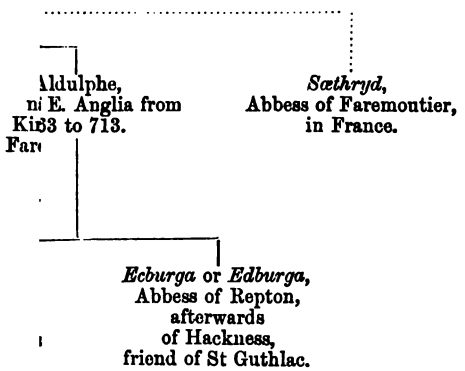
[1] Matth. iv. 22.

blood of our blood? Is it a man? No: it is God. There lies the great secret, there the key of this sublime and sad mystery. God alone could win such victories, and deserve such sacrifices. Jesus, whose godhead is amongst us daily insulted or denied, proves it daily, with a thousand other proofs, by those miracles of self-denial and self-devotion which are called vocations. Young and innocent hearts give themselves to Him, to reward Him for the gift He has given us of Himself; and this sacrifice by which we are crucified is but the answer of human love to the love of that God who was crucified for us.

ÆSCINGS, KINGS OF KENT.


St Ethelburga,
wife of Edwin, King of Northumbria. Widow in 633, foundress of Lyminge, and nun there.
Eanfleda,
wife of Oswy, King of Northumbria, afterwards nun at Whitby under her daughter.
EGBERT,
King from 664 to 673.
Ælfleda,
born 655, died 715. Devoted to God by her father as the price of his victory over Penda; Abbess of Whitby.

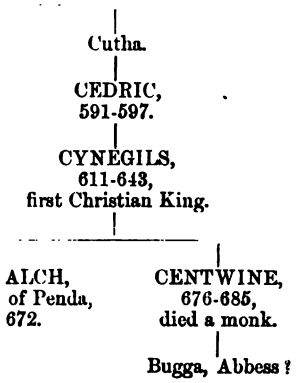
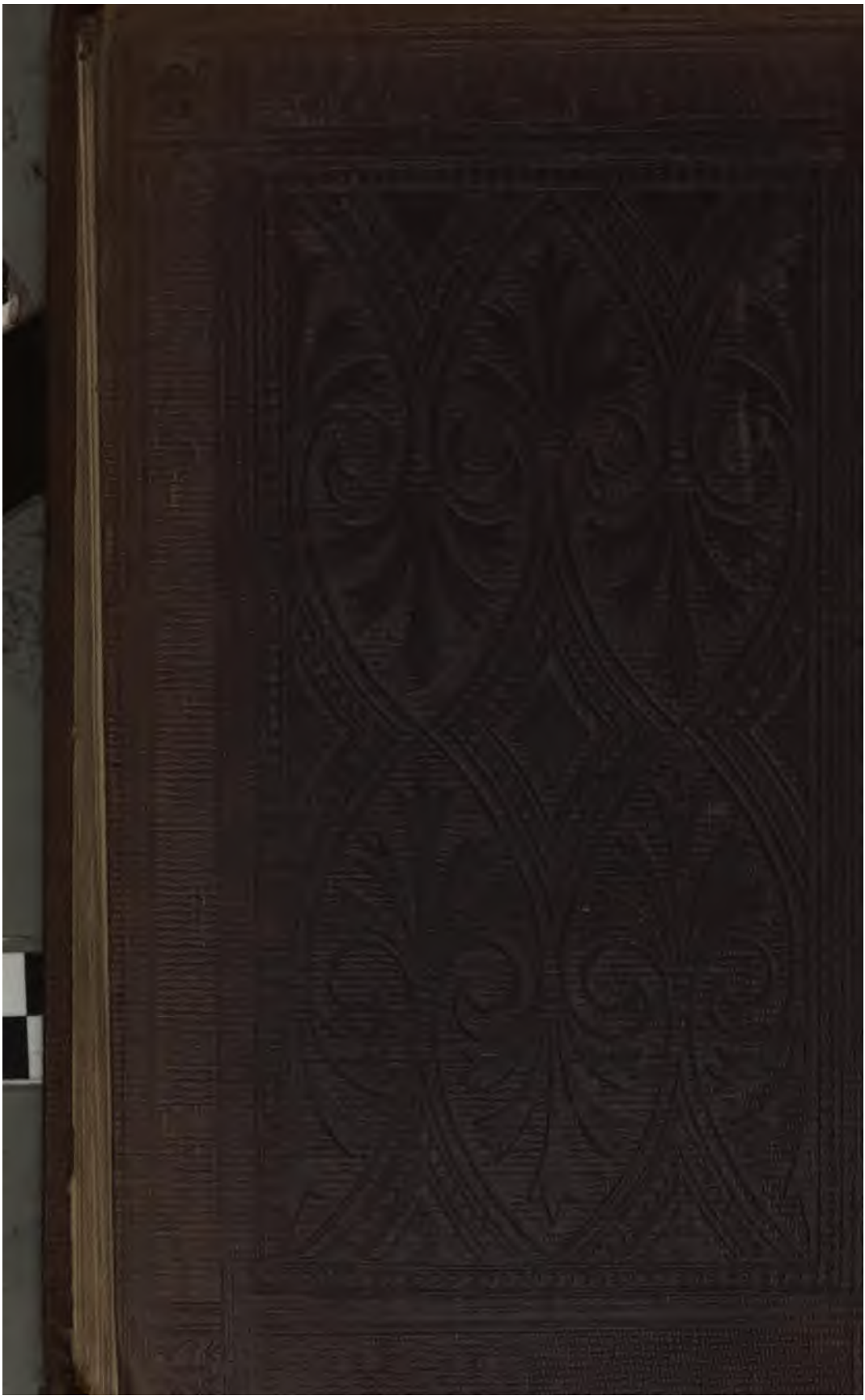
WHO TOOK THE VEIL.




23; *Liber Eliensis*, p. 15; LAPPENBERG, p. 237.)

EX.

BRANCHES.)


Cutha.
CEDRIC,
591-597.
CYNEGILS,
611-643,
first Christian King.
ALCH,
of Penda,
672.
CENTWINE,
676-685,
died a monk.
Bugga, Abbess?